



ISLAM *in a* CHANGING MIDDLE EAST

Rethinking Islamist Politics

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Please see <http://pomeps.org/2014/01/rethinking-islamist-politics-conference/> for online versions of all of the articles in this briefing.

The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by the Carnegie Corporation and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see <http://www.pomeps.org>.

The Arab uprisings of 2011 radically reshaped the environment within which Islamist movements had evolved over the preceding decades, causing rapid, disorienting changes in their strategies, ideologies, and organizations. The last three years have produced an enormous amount of new information about these movements: detailed election results; factional and generational and intra-Islamist rivalries spilling out into public; varying degrees of political polarization between Islamists and their rivals; the erratic performance of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood after coming to power through elections and the fallout from its removal through popular protest and military coup; the emergence of a sharp public backlash against the Brotherhood in Egypt, at least, and a crackdown on its social services; a new nationwide campaign designating the Brotherhood as a terrorist organization; the surprising evolution of al Qaeda and jihadist movements from Syria and Iraq through North Africa.

In January 2014, the Project on Middle East Political Science therefore convened a workshop with fifteen leading academic specialists on Islamist movements in the Arab Middle East and charged them with rethinking key assumptions, arguments, evidence and research programs in light of these three tumultuous years. The workshop brought together European and American academics with specialties ranging from mainstream movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood to jihadists and non-violent Salafists, and with expertise on countries ranging from the Gulf through Egypt and the Levant to North Africa. This special POMEPS Briefing collects the memos prepared for the workshop. The short essays collected here touch on many of these issues, pointing towards a rich set of compelling new theoretical and empirical questions with which the field must now grapple.

Some of the memos push back against the notion that this is the time for a major rethinking. Many key developments remain cloaked in shadow, with very incomplete information amidst a thick haze of propaganda, rumor, and politicized narratives. Even more, some scholars worry that the valuable progress made over the previous decade will be lost to a hasty, premature abandonment of accumulated knowledge. After all, Egypt specialists accurately estimated the Muslim Brotherhood's political base as measured by its electoral performance, and anticipated its political performance in power by observing internal changes (as described by Carrie Rosefsky Wickham and Khalil al-Anani) leading to "the dominance of the conservative faction within the Brotherhood [which] adopted a rigid worldview and wasn't able to adjust to the new environment after Hosni Mubarak's downfall." As Tarek Masoud argues: "Instead of rethinking political Islam, we may wonder if political Islam is the right thing to be thinking about at all right now. ... Instead of fretting over what Islamists do, say, and believe, we should instead direct our attentions to the broader social, economic, and structural factors that have rendered much of the Arab world ... stunningly bereft of the prospects for democratic, representative, and accountable government." But still, most accept that at least some of the developments of the last few years do pose significant challenges to prevailing theories.

Many of the scholars here emphasize the importance of grasping the variety of Islamist movements and organizations across many different countries and contexts. They generally resist any effort to impute a singular identity or essential essence to such movements. Islamists in Yemen and Egypt and Tunisia may share some organizational forms, ideological aspirations, and political language, but they also can behave in strikingly different ways. As Carrie Rosefsky Wickham argues, this “heterogeneity makes any grand generalizations about the broader purposes of Islamist groups, as well as their internal dynamics, operational strategies, and immediate goals, problematic at best and nonsensical at worst.” Wickham emphasizes how much has been revealed about “the nature of internal factions, the (shifting) balance of power among them, and the issues of ideology, strategy, and group practice.” This emphasis on internal factions, internal tactical and ideological battles, and generational divides is a far cry from the popular depiction of the Muslim Brotherhood as an extremely disciplined, hierarchical totalitarian organization.

The participants warn in particular against overly generalizing based on the Egyptian case. As important and central as Egypt is to the Islamist universe, it is not necessarily typical of similar movements elsewhere. Stacey Philbrick Yadav argues powerfully against “an overreliance on Egypt as a focal point in understanding Islamism ... which has led scholars to speculate about the possible future trajectories of Islamism in other contexts on the basis of the Brotherhood’s experience, an experience that has been driven by a range of factors that are more or less generalizable outside of Egypt.” How did Tunisia’s Ennahda do so well in its elections despite having been repressed for decades and without the sorts of social services supposedly so crucial to Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood? Why did Morocco’s Party for Justice and Development (PJD) accept a share of governing power while other movements opted to remain outside the system? What about Jordan’s Muslim Brotherhood, Yemen’s al-Islah or Islamists across the Gulf?

These questions go to the heart of methodological debates about how to study these movements and where to focus research. Is there greater need today for more close studies of particular movements or for more comparative analysis across and within cases? Which aspects of Islamist political behavior, for instance, are best explained by their distinctive internal organizational or ideological characteristics or by the environment in which they operated? What, if anything, was distinctly Islamist about the response of different Islamist movements across these multiple cases? If Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood was so rigidly hierarchical, why did its behavior change so erratically during the post-Mubarak years rather than remaining cautiously conservative? Nathan Brown persuasively argues for less attention to “the intentions of the leaders and more to the environment in which they operate.” But the relative importance of political structure and the character of the actors remains an open question for political scientists. Is the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideology and internal organizational structure really not relevant for explaining its approach to governance? Would any other organization faced with a similarly unsettled, polarized, and unpredictably changing institutional environment have responded in the same way? Such questions call out for comparative analysis, both within cases and across cases. How

did the Muslim Brotherhood's response to Egypt's radically uncertain political environment compare to that of Salafis or of non-Islamists? How did Egypt's Islamists compare to Islamists, and non-Islamists, in Tunisia or Libya or Yemen?

The question of environmental effects involves not only unsettled political institutions but also broad trends at the level of public opinion and public culture. The massive public turn against the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt over the last year, for instance, seems to challenge prevailing theories of a decades-long, comprehensive Islamization of public space and political discourse. But as Nathan Brown observes, in Egypt today “the movement is suffering not merely from political repression but from social ostracism. The hatred for the Brotherhood expressed by so many in Egyptian public life (and, in my experience, reflected in many private conversations) is overwhelming and likely unprecedented.” Steven Brooke, based on his research on the Brotherhood's charity work, similarly notes that the “speed and malice with which Egyptians have turned on the Brotherhood ... poses problems for the Islamization thesis's conclusions.” How could decades of the Islamization of society and culture have been so quickly reversed? Some might argue that public life remains deeply Islamicized, despite the setbacks of the Muslim Brotherhood. Is it “not the failure of Islamist groups or the exhaustion of the Islamic frame of reference for political projects, but the increasing proliferation of ways to do and articulate Islamist politics” in Michaëlle Browers's phrasing? Is it “not the disappearance of an Islamist referent but “the pluralization of Islamic socio-political space and the Muslim Brotherhood's loss of monopoly over the claim to articulate an Islamic social order” as according to Peter Mandaville? But others will find something more fundamental going on with the political turn against Islamism. Either way, this will be a rich terrain for future research.

Academics have never demonstrated much interest in the question of whether the Muslim Brotherhood should be seen as “moderate,” since few view “moderate” as a useful analytical category. They are more concerned with identifying accurately the ideological trends, organizational structures, and political strategies of a diverse array of movements. The differences between the Muslim Brotherhood and al Qaeda seem to be so obvious that only a few scholars see the point of even pointing it out. This may be premature, however, with Egypt and several Gulf regimes leading an aggressive public campaign to designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization and to equate the Brotherhood with al Qaeda. Arguments, which seemed to have been settled years ago, are now back, in force. And they come at a time when the actual lines between movements have been blurred by events, as jihadist movements such as Ansar al-Sharia move into social service provision and mainstream movements find their tightly hierarchical organizational structures smashed and their memberships responding in very different ways to new political challenges. If the Muslim Brotherhood did once serve as a firewall against al Qaeda recruitment, will it still do the same after being overthrown by the Egyptian military and its organization viciously repressed? Long-held assumptions about jihadist movements, Thomas Hegghammer notes, now have to be as systematically rethought as do those about all other Islamist trends.

For political theorists, too, there are questions about the future of Islamist ideas about democracy and political participation. Joas Wagemakers argues that “the (partial) acceptance of democracy among Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, has been a long process that has been influenced mainly by local circumstances and international Islamist discourse and is unlikely to change drastically after, for example, the coup in Egypt. In other words, democratically minded Muslim Brotherhood members are unlikely to dismiss democracy altogether now that their effort to rule Egypt has been thwarted. People who were not too keen on democracy all along, however, will likely feel vindicated. Recent events in Egypt may also sway some Brothers who were always doubtful about democracy’s merits.” Perhaps, but it seems difficult to believe that Islamists who watched the overturning of Mohamed Morsi’s elected government will so easily go back to the polls or be convinced that they will ever be allowed to govern as elected leaders. Can the commitment to procedural democracy, which dominated Muslim Brotherhood discourse for decades, survive Egypt’s coup?

Other scholars are even more skeptical. Even if the Brothers were committed to procedural democracy, did their behavior in power prove that this commitment mattered less than their deeper illiberalism? During his recent research trips, Mokhtar Awad found that “for a growing number of Islamist youth the issue is no longer about politics but rather the soul of the Islamist project. They have lost faith not just in democracy, but also in the modern state itself — and in traditional Islamists’ approach to changing it (both the Brotherhood and non-violent Salafis).” Roel Meijer now believes that “we have been far too optimistic about the changes within the Brotherhood. Although the Brotherhood may have accepted terms such as citizenship and civil state, and even the people’s sovereignty, and the ‘will of the people’ (iradat al-shaab), it is clear that the Brotherhood did not accept politics and the political.” And for Tarek Masoud, “the brief experience of Islamism in power has given us precious little reason to revise the view of Islamists as fundamentally illiberal. Though the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies spoke often of individual freedom, the reality was that their vision of individual freedom proved to be one that was heavily bounded.” How will Islamist ideas now evolve after the experience of recent years?

These POMEPS memos set forth a challenging and provocative set of research questions, with which the field has only begun to engage. We hope that they stimulate further discussion, debate, research, and serious, methodologically rigorous and empirically informed scholarly engagement with these vitally important issues.

*Marc Lynch, Director of POMEPS
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The Debacle of Orthodox Islamism

By Khalil al-Anani, Middle East Institute

The downfall of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood has put political Islam at a crossroads. Not only has it shown that ideology per se is not a guarantor of political success, but also that Islamists need to rethink their strategy and tactics in order to deal with the new environment following the Arab Spring.

However, the debate over the end of political Islam in the Middle East is not only premature but also irrelevant and certainly misleading. Instead it would be more useful to discuss the ideological and political changes that might occur within Islamist movements during crisis time.

The Debacle of Orthodox Islamism

The failure of the Brotherhood in power has revealed the inability of orthodox Islamism to adapt to the political environment that developed from the Arab Spring. By orthodox Islamism I mean the traditional Islamist movements that emerged over the past century and are burdened by its stagnant structure, its sprawling organization, and the domination of a conservative, old-fashioned style of leadership.

Therefore, it is highly important to unpack the underlying factors that affect Islamists' ideology and shape their political calculus and strategy during transitions. The Brotherhood, for instance, has failed to maintain power in Egypt not only because of its incompetence and political inexperience, which was evident, but also because of its rigid organizational structure and obsolete ideology that shaped the movement's strategy, calculations, and political choices. The decision to run for presidency, for instance, was driven mainly by political miscalculation and misconception of the new realities without deliberate discussion or genuine debate within the movement. Hence the Shura Council, the Brotherhood's legislative body, was deeply divided over fielding a presidential candidate and whether the

movement should abandon its self-restrained strategy that it had adopted for decades.

Moreover, the dominance of the conservative faction within the Brotherhood has contributed to its removal from power. Over the past two decades the Brotherhood has been controlled by a "narrow" power center that dominated the movement and precluded calls for internal reform. This faction adopted a rigid worldview and wasn't able to adjust to the new environment after Hosni Mubarak's downfall. When the Brotherhood took power in 2012, the so-called "reformist" current was almost absent or marginalized. The inauguration of Mohamed Morsi as Egypt's first democratically and freely elected president in June 2012 was a triumphant moment for the conservative leadership within the Brotherhood, and the election dissipated the hopes of reforming the Brotherhood via fundamental changes in its ideology, discourse, and strategy.

In addition, the nature of the Brotherhood's organizational structure — which was created and infused by Hasan al-Banna eight decades ago and maintained by his successors — has contributed to the Brotherhood's failure. As a social movement, the Brotherhood has a highly disciplined structure that is rooted and maintained by a profoundly conservative and rigid code of norms and values such as obedience, loyalty, allegiance, nepotism, and commitment. While this well-knit structure safeguarded the Brotherhood from Mubarak's brutal repression and preserved its cohesion, it has become a hurdle after the uprising. The Brotherhood continued to operate as a secretive and underground movement without any attempt to modernize its code of values. Indeed, the lack of a pluralistic worldview and the absence of a flexible strategy within the Brotherhood can be ascribed to the influence of this set of norms and values. This lack deepened the mistrust between the Brotherhood and other political forces and reinforced external skepticism over its commitment toward democratic values.

The Cost of Conservatism

The fall of the Brotherhood has revealed the crisis that faces Islamists in the age of Arab Uprising: the lack of a revolutionary mindset and agenda. The majority of Islamist movements in the Arab world maintains a conservative and outdated vision that could not live up to the aspirations and dreams that fueled the Arab Spring three years ago. This conservatism, or lack of revolutionary ideology, continues to be incompatible with the new environment that exists now after the fall of the old regimes.

The majority of the Arab youth who took to the streets were driven by an ambitious, revolutionary agenda that they believed could change their lives and destiny. However, the youth were struck by the emergence of the traditional Islamists who sought to diffuse the revolution. Moreover, Islamist movements appear to be a reflection of a traditional and conservative social bloc that seems to have Arab societies in its grip. The inability to create such a revolutionary platform is in fact the most important reason for the Brotherhood's downfall. The Islamists continue to act as the largest conservative social movement in Egypt. Therefore, the Brotherhood has a considerable appeal among the lower and lower-middle classes located mainly in the Nile Delta and the more impoverished parts of Upper Egypt. Surprisingly, large segments of these demographics turned away from the Brotherhood during its year in power, although they benefitted the most from the group's social services network.

The Brotherhood's conservative ideology had guaranteed a social reservoir during the past three decades, however, it became a burden after the uprising. Not surprisingly, during its year in power, the Brotherhood's discourse and rhetoric resonated more with Salafis and former jihadists than it resonated with young revolutionaries. Moreover, while in power, Morsi's policies and decisions were driven by this conservatism. Therefore, instead of reforming state institutions (e.g., the police, bureaucracy, military etc.), Morsi sought to appease and contain them. Instead of focusing on resolving the social and economic problems, the Brotherhood was consumed by and dragged into other

controversial and highly contested issues such as identity, religion, and politics, not to mention bickering with Salafis and other political forces. It seems that the Brotherhood has paid a high price for its conservatism and lack of progressive and revolutionary agenda.

The Specter of Radicalization

Historically, repression has been a key factor in generating extremism by fueling the emergence of radical and violent Islamist trends. When Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's president during the 1950s and 1960s, prosecuted and tortured many members of the Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb, surfaced as the chief ideologue and inspired many young Islamists to implement his philosophy on the ground. Similarly, the massacre at the Rabba al-Adawiya mosque, which left hundreds of peaceful protesters dead, in addition to the on-going repression, are potential turning points in the path of political Islam.

However, radicalization doesn't happen suddenly or overnight. It takes time to be indoctrinated and infused within Islamists' structure and ideology. Moreover, the traditional and peaceful Islamist movements, such as the Brotherhood, realize the dangers and the cost of radicalization and using violence in the political conflict. Not only could radicalization affect the popularity and credibility of the movement, but it would also give the regime a pretext to exclude it from the political scene.

Nevertheless, the lack of communication between young Islamists and their leadership, coupled with the absence of the weekly ritual gathering — both of which help in moderating young Islamists' views — could increase the potential for radicalization. Having lost faith in democracy, it is likely that some young Islamists may exchange participation in peaceful politics for an extreme ideology and tactics.

Survival vs. Reform

During repression, survival becomes the chief goal for Islamists. As ideological and social movements, Islamists

tend to unite in order to maintain cohesion among their rank-and-file. This has been the case with the Brotherhood since its founding in 1928. The movement has encountered many crises over the last decades; however, it hasn't fractured or split. Over the past three decades, the Brotherhood has capitalized on former President Hosni Mubarak's brutality and dehumanization of the group. Counterintuitively, oppression enables Islamists to survive and unite while also strengthening and expanding their social networks. This was illustrated when Mubarak's ouster enabled the Brotherhood to emerge as Egypt's most robust and organized movement.

Nevertheless, the Brotherhood's history has shown that survival always comes at the expense of change and reform. The conservative wing within the movement used to employ repression in order to prevent the calls for change.

The current debate among Brotherhood's members is not how to reform and hold the leadership accountable for mistakes of the last year but rather how to survive and maintain the cohesion of the rank and file.

History has shown political Islam to be a resilient phenomenon. When Islamists encounter an existential threat, they tend to adapt, endure, and recover, albeit in different forms. However, the brutal repression and exclusion always take Islamists down different paths that no one is able to predict.

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Understanding the Ideological Drivers Pushing Youth Toward Violence in Post-Coup Egypt

By Mokhtar Awad, Center for American Progress

The military overthrow of Egypt's first president from the Muslim Brotherhood has raised important questions about the potential use of violence by the Brotherhood. Most members of the Brotherhood's leadership today are unnerved by this likelihood, however, and are careful to frame their battle in terms of a return to political legitimacy and to a democratic process of which Morsi is a nonnegotiable part. However, not everyone in the MB and its Islamist allies is satisfied with such a response to the events of 2013. For a growing number of Islamist youth the issue is no longer about politics but rather the soul of the Islamist project. They have lost faith not just in democracy, but also in the modern state itself — and in traditional Islamists' approach to changing it (both the Brotherhood and non-violent Salafis). Some youth are starting to believe

that the answer lies in the violent deconstruction of the modern nationalist state.

It is important to question the drivers for this possible turn to violence. Is it solely reactionary and a natural byproduct of repressing Islamists? Is it simply taking up arms to accomplish what the ballot box failed to do or to protect the organization at any cost? Previous turns to violence have been characterized by a small core of hardened individuals with uncompromising views toward the world and their fellow Muslims, but can history simply repeat itself today? And so, it becomes important to focus on the power of ideas during periods of transformation, which the Islamist landscape in Egypt is arguably going through.

The unprecedented violence and polarization gripping Egypt today has set the stage for an urgent, radical rethinking of the Islamic project's purpose and direction, specifically by the younger generation. The trajectory is one that increasingly rejects the West and Western-style Democracy, but it is also influenced by revolutionary attitudes in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the critique of the politically conservative nature of established groups — whether the Muslim Brotherhood or the Salafi Dawa. Islamists are not predisposed to the use of violence. But the majority of these Islamist youth are exceedingly frustrated, with the current situation. More attention needs to be paid to their evolving ideas and how they might influence Egyptian Islamism moving forward.

The acculturation of Islamist youth plays a critical role in shaping their worldview and sense of organization and purpose. This even extends to less hierarchical groups like the Salafi Dawa, which has invested heavily in acculturation beyond the mosque, such as catching up with their followers online with a constant stream of sermons and fatwas. But for a number of young Islamists these efforts were never satisfactory, and they embarked on their own process to find answers for the fundamental questions their Islamist parent organizations sought to answer on modernity and politics.

As an example, in the past decade, very small groups of intellectually driven and studious youth have developed a counter discourse to the Brotherhood's tactical adoption of democracy (as they see it). These groups explore issues of religious and national identity and the compatibility of modernity with Islam. Across Egypt's campuses, youth have been founding new forums to reassess Islam's answers to the mounting problems facing the Ummah. One such forum that attempts to constructively examine these issues is the Model Organization of Islamic Conference or MOIC¹. Its mission statement emphasizes the students'

1 MOIC started in 2006 and is now in four of Egypt's universities. To clarify, MOIC is not a political organization but rather a forum that has allowed some Islamist youth to develop their own ideas and was mentioned numerous times by subjects interviewed who used to be affiliated with it. For more on MOIC see its Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/moic.eg/info>

desire to find “balance” in the face of what they call “the challenges of Westernization.” In the early years of MOIC topics of discussion focused heavily on regional Muslim issues, but in the wake of the January 25 revolution, discussions progressively honed in on the effort to reconcile nationalism, Islamism, and modernity. This process is most influential with youth who drifted away from the Muslim Brotherhood, which they perceived to be archaic and unequipped to answer their questions.²

These youth are of course following in the tradition of such 20th century thinkers as Malik Bennabi and Abdul Wahab el-Mesiri who were concerned with what they saw as the fall of Muslim civilization and critiqued secularism.³ What distinguishes today's young thinkers, however, is that they are less theoretical and have focused on projects and workshops that have allowed them to challenge their ideas on state and politics — independent of their parent organizations and in sharp contrast to the comprehensive acculturation process they may have undergone in the Muslim Brotherhood or Salafi Dawa.

There has also been a rise of so-called “intellectual Salafis.” Their views might be orthodox, but their approach is radically different from traditional Salafi sheikhs. Some join new youth-led groups like Mirfa⁴ (Knowledge), which focuses on shaping a “new generation of youth who believe that knowledge is the basis for renaissance...and shaping the social consciousness.” These groups usually hold workshops and talks that cover everything from civil-military relations to reestablishing the Islamist movement. One of the more active members of the group is a former student of Yassir Burhami. Although he remains a self-described Salafi, he describes Burhami as becoming out of touch and not scientifically equipped to answer

2 Author interview with ex-Muslim Brotherhood youth, Cairo, December 2013, in upcoming Center for American Progress report.

3 A review of Malik Bennabi's views on democracy can be found in: “Islam and Democracy in Malek Bennabi's Thought,” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 15, No. 1, spring 1998, pp. 107-112.

4 For more on Mirfa and its activities see its Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/marefa/info>

complicated questions facing the Ummah.⁵

Other more politically minded youth study Western texts and the modern history of secularism in-depth, focusing heavily on neo-Marxist theory like that of the Frankfurt School for its critique of the modern Western state. They arm themselves with these critiques to challenge what they say is Arab secularists' and Islamists' misguided desire to implement Western-style democracy as a vehicle for modernization. They concede that secular democracy has its merits, but argue that it is fundamentally incompatible with Muslim society and history — for it lacks the enriching component of religion. The gradually rising popularity of this modern Islamist approach is striking. In recent interviews in Egypt designed to focus on the political future of Islamists, younger interview subjects quickly dismissed the political nature of the current battle as a shortsighted characterization and the term “Frankfurt School” was perhaps mentioned more than Morsi in some conversations.

Many of these youth were critical of the Muslim Brotherhood's approach even before the coup. They accused the movement of falling into the trap of equating modernity with material gains — evinced by the Brotherhood's obsession over the concept of Western-modeled economic and industrial renaissance that lacked the proper Islamic component of moral values.⁶ Some youth argued that the Brotherhood's quest for power only served to provide an Islamic cover for an inherently un-Islamic state.⁷ These youth have translated Western texts on “moderate” Islamists and think-tank reports recommending strategies to engage Islamists as proof of Western designs to manipulate democracy as a tool for

neo-colonization and subversion of the Islamist project.⁸ To them, the MB is either complicit or duped.

The only venue other than the Internet and the forums that debated these views was a television show called *In Reality*, which aired on the Islamist Amgad channel. *In Reality's* host was a controversial young Salafi named Hossam Abu el-Boukary. His show provided perhaps some of the most scathing repudiations by young Islamists of the Brotherhood's adoption of Western-style democracy. Yet, last summer, Boukhary was a fierce defender of Morsi and his vitriolic speeches in Rabaa landed him in jail⁹. Boukhary used his knowledge of Christian texts and Western discourse toward Islamism to launch rabid, sectarian attacks on liberals and Christians in various talk shows that he frequented. This contradiction may shed light on the often-conflicted nature of some of these emerging thinkers as they struggle to be a voice of revivalist Islam. However, the uncompromising attitudes of Boukhary and others signal a frustration with society and the political order — Islamist and non-Islamist.

The overwhelming majority of the youth described above do not advocate for violence, but their discourse and activities, which have continued after the coup, prove a challenge for the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi Dawa. The former is deflecting critique and serious reexamination of its purpose due to repression, and the latter has chosen physical survival over anything else. But, what is of concern is that some youth who are influenced by this revivalist intellectual discourse are now arguing that the use of violence is justified against the state to end oppression and build a new state. This in itself is a sharp departure from the intellectual process discussed above,

5 Author interview with ex-Salafi Dawa youth, Alexandria, December 2013, in upcoming Center for American Progress report.

6 Television interview with Salafi thinker Abdel Rahman Abu Zekry. Amgad Television. February 22, 2013. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nN7s2vka_zY

7 Television interview with Salafi thinker Ayman Abdul Rahim. Amgad Television. March 1, 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3l7xZwxaDS0>

8 The Islamist Tanweer Publishing House whose Editor-in-Chief is the Salafi Abdel Rahman Abu Zekry recently translated (January 2014) a 2003 RAND report titled “Civil Democratic Islam.” The publisher translated the report as a book and the cover art shows a woman wearing an American flag Hijab: <https://d202m5krfqbp5.cloudfront.net/books/13584507011/17256381.jpg>. The original RAND report can be accessed here: http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1716.pdf

9 YouTube video of one of al-Bukhari's speeches on the Rabaa stage. In it, he claims that the Egyptian coup was designed by the United States and describes America's history as bloody and violent. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ucrEPLt5Gs>

since none of the organizations or young thinkers have ever explicitly made the case for confrontation or violence. The dynamics of the current state of affairs in Egypt, however, does not make the intellectual leap too great to come to terms with a reality that conditions can only change or improve with a radical change in the system of power. Thus, coming to embrace violence as a means to an end, but still very much separate from and different from Jihadi interpretations.

To some of these youth, the coup not only symbolizes the failures of the traditional Islamist approach, but it also symbolizes the penalty for the Muslim Brotherhood's failure to take action to confront the corrupt state years ago. These youth capitalize on present reactionary violence against the police and attempt to escalate it while pushing other youth, especially those still following orders inside the Brotherhood, to adopt violence as a strategy.¹⁰ In their view, Egypt is ruled by an exploitative military empire, which extracts resources through the intelligence services, the police, and entrenched business networks. They argue that Egypt is a nationalist state that serves the interests of and is manipulated by the West, which forbids any real progress, especially the Islamist revival. In order to succeed

10 Author interview with ex-MB youth, Alexandria, December 2013 in upcoming Center for American Progress report.

in deconstructing this state they must appeal to the poor and marginalized to fight alongside them against the state in a sort of armed populist insurgency. Their idealist understanding of the power of Muslim values leads them to believe that in a protracted period of anarchy, citizens will police and govern themselves as their reliance on the centralized government ends. From there, society can be rebuilt and perhaps establish an Islamic democracy based on an Islamic variation of popular legitimacy, as it breaks free of the nationalist state and Western hegemony.

It remains unclear whether these calls for violence will resonate widely, but it is important to understand the ideas shaping them as the window for any talk of political reconciliation closes. It is also important to explore the possible impact of this revolutionary strand and what possible impact it might have since violence is not and will not only come from Sinai based jihadi groups and affiliates. Furthermore, even if the promised violence by some of these youth is contained, their ideas will unlikely change toward their parent organizations, which are increasingly under pressure to respond to the challenges raised by these youth.

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Why do Islamists Provide Social Services?

By Steven Brooke, University of Texas at Austin

Most scholars have theorized that Islamist social service provision generates a substantial ideological change, in effect an Islamization, among those who benefit from it. This provision thus acclimates recipients to Islamists' non-institutional activism in the civic and social realms. But the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's dramatic reversal of fortune following a decidedly conventional stint in power frustrates important portions of this argument. These events indicate the conformism of the Islamist political project, one dedicated not to bypassing or degrading state institutions, but to succeeding within and controlling them. This, in turn, suggests reorienting the study of Islamist service provision away from extra-institutional theories of civil society and social movements and toward more routine theories of political mobilization.

Despite differences in other important aspects of their approaches, multiple authors have found that Islamists' service provision changes the ideology of populations served. Two clusters of studies are worth highlighting. In the first, authors rely on the civil society literature to suggest that Islamists' social service provision diffuses an Islamist ideology across the population. Authors in the second cluster use the social movement literature to argue that this service provision serves to prime potential recruits to the Islamist movement. In a June 2003 essay Sheri Berman argues that Islamist social service was at the core of a civil society project to spread Islamist values, contributing to state de-legitimization under Anwar Sadat and Honsi Mubarak. Quintan Wicktorowicz and Suha Taji Farouki's Gramscian analysis suggests that this provision changes a population's "cultural discourse and values." More recently, Nancy Davis and Robert Robinson's *Claiming Society for God* (2012) finds that the Brotherhood's charitable provision animates an alternative, parallel form of community permeated with their ideological vision.

Decreasing in scope from entire populations to specific subsections, Carrie Wickham's *Mobilizing Islam* (2002)

asks how Egypt's Islamic movement gained supporters despite the risks this activism entailed, including harassment, imprisonment, and even death. Starting from the social movement theory literature, she argues that Islamic social institutions spread an activist reading of Islam that "changed the preferences of educated youth," making them more likely to participate in this high-risk mobilization.¹ In *Islam, Charity, and Activism* (2004) Janine Clark suggests that Islamic clinics serve to embed middle class individuals in Islamic networks, strengthening and spreading an Islamic social movement by drawing in new adherents and, over time, acclimatizing them to the Islamic message.

In addition to similar assumptions of the effects of these services, these authors also share a deeper heuristic about what Islamists want and how they seek to bring it about. The Brotherhood, they propose, is fundamentally antagonistic to existing institutions of government and politics. Most of these scholars agree that the Brotherhood has embraced nonviolent means (though Berman's invocation of the Nazis, alongside the Chinese and Russian Communists muddies the water) and that traditional styles of politics are something with which Islamists engage peripherally or as an afterthought, if at all. Logically, then, it makes little sense to analyze them with theories of "ordinary" politics based on of parties, campaigns, voting, and legislatures. Instead, scholars shunted their study of Islamist social service provision through institutional politics' theoretical antipodes, namely civil society and social movements. Davis and Robinson dub the Islamists' strategy "bypassing the state."² Berman says "Blocked from full political participation and allowed much greater freedom in civil society, the Islamist movement set about

1 Wickham, Carrie Rosefsky. 2002. *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*. New York: Columbia University Press. 148.

2 Davis, Nancy J. and Robert V. Robinson. 2012. *Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1.

Islamizing Egypt from below”³ Wickham describes Islamic activism as “new forms of civic engagement detached from — and opposed to — formal political institutions and elites.”⁴ Denis Joseph Sullivan and Sana Abed-Kotob subtitled their volume on Islam in contemporary Egypt, “Civil Society vs. the State” (1999).

Importantly, it is not my intention to conflate either these two clusters of literature or the authors’ specific theories — indeed, there are deep and significant differences between them — just to suggest that all share the two above-mentioned characteristics. To restate the first, Islamists are revolutionary actors, in the sense that they pursue significant, systematic change through non-institutional (but non-violent) means. Second, Islamists’ service provision serves this end by generating a deep-seated, non-trivial change in its recipients’ ideological orientation, either alienating those populations from conventional politics or spurring them to press their claims outside of it.

Both these assumptions should be re-examined in light of post-February 11, 2011 events in Egypt. These events, especially the distinctly statist tenure of the Brotherhood and the rapid anti-Brotherhood shift in Egyptians’ attitudes, propose ways to rethink not only the Islamization thesis, but also the assumptions about Islamist’ motivations and behaviors upon which it is based. Simultaneously, the Brotherhood’s recent behavior supports alternative conceptualizations of Islamism that, in turn, should prompt new theories to explain and predict Islamist social service provision.

Given a general absence of elected Islamist governments, for years it was one’s theoretical and ideological priorities that formed the basis for models of Islamist behavior. But Egypt’s brief interlude between military regimes has provided a glimpse — albeit a fleeting and partial one — at the Islamist governing project. And for an organization supposedly striving to remake Egypt’s political regime, the Brotherhood displayed a curious fealty to the status quo. Domestically, the Brotherhood behaved as classic

“soft liners,” spurning revolutionaries’ calls to overhaul the security services and other important sectors of the former regime. Instead, the Brotherhood struck an essentially non-interference pact with those they thought were more compliant members of the security apparatus. Their legislative accomplishments contained little that could be described as religious or revolutionary. The constitution was a mediocre rewrite of the 1971 text and surprising not for its religiosity, but for the lack thereof, especially given the composition of the assembly. Economically, the group quickly adopted the same neoliberal development and investment policies and pursued similar deals with international financial institutions and donors that their predecessors sought — in the process providing a tortured justification for accepting an “un-Islamic” interest rate. In foreign affairs they quickly accommodated the U.S.-led regional order. Most prominently, they toed the line on the Israel-Palestine conflict, brokering a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas in late 2012 and keeping up the blockade on Gaza by pumping raw sewage into the smuggling tunnels that linked it to the Sinai. Although this sample is truncated and potentially distorted, it does not support the assumptions that Islamists’ governing vision was dramatically different from their predecessors.

The speed and malice with which Egyptians have turned on the Brotherhood, especially following July 3, 2013 also poses problems for the Islamization thesis’s conclusions. Specifically, things like religious belief, culture, and ethnicity are generally “sticky,” meaning that they don’t tend to shift overnight, and when they shift they only do so incrementally. And indeed, the authors above show how these services spent four decades sprawling across Egypt, sinking deep roots into local communities by meeting critical needs. But in roughly one year Egyptians went from propelling the Brotherhood into power to informing on and attacking them in the streets. While elites stoking smoldering ethnic and religious hatreds for political gain is certainly not new, the Egyptian case stands out for its success both in generating a new cleavage and so quickly mobilizing people around it. For theories that find a massive project of ideological outreach and acclimatization behind Islamist service provision, the

3 Berman, Sheri. 2003. “Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society.” *Perspectives On Politics* 1, no. 2: 263.

4 Wickham. *Mobilizing Islam*. 148.

Brotherhood's current turn as Egyptian politics' *bête noir* is an unexpected outcome — worldviews should not be so malleable and support not so volatile.

Revisiting theories of Islamist behavior in light of these events suggests analyzing the Brotherhood with the same tools traditionally used with other opposition parties. As Joshua Stacher neatly put it, "The Brotherhood is a political organization first and foremost and an Islamist one only secondly." Thus, the group's goals were not to drive people from existing institutions but to advance within them, either through direct participation (voting and electoral mobilization), or by pressuring decision makers from the outside. Instead of seeking out ways to degrade existing institutions, the Brotherhood had become vitally invested in them.

Starting from this new assumption, we might recalibrate the discussion of Islamist social service provision away from ideological, transformative arguments to more mundane theories of political mobilization. For instance, Tarek Masoud (forthcoming) provides survey evidence that Islamist social service delivery efforts are important because they allow Islamists to communicate their policy preferences — especially economic ones — to voters. Ideological change is not in the cards. As Masoud puts it, "Mosques, charities, and religious associations may create Islamist voters, but they do not create Islamists." Masoud's study makes an important contribution by moving the study of Islamist social service provision into the realm of "ordinary politics," particularly by suggesting that Islamists attract supporters programmatically. In other words, people choose to support Islamists at the ballot box because the Islamists best reflect the population's political preferences. Further research might interrogate this mechanism more fully, questioning whether the relationship is truly programmatic or simply based on a contingent exchange of goods/ services for electoral support, one that requires no fidelity between a party's program and a voter's preferences. This type of clientelism is a time-honored feature and scourge of Egyptian (and most other countries') politics, and the Wafd, Dustor, or even the National Democratic Party, deftly leverage social service provision to mobilize local voters. There does not seem to be a justifiable reason to expect that,

when it comes to the Brotherhood, something completely novel is afoot. Counterfactually, an assertion that the Wafd party was using its clinics in a sweeping plan of societal transformation does not seem defensible. The Wafd does not provide clinics to transform Egyptians into hardcore Wafdist, they provide the services so that come election time the residents vote for Wafd candidates.

Of course, this is not so much "new thinking" as it is simply re-examining phenomena with existing tools, but it does offer some advantages. For instance, the contingent and episodic nature of clientelist support helps to disaggregate and clarify who votes for the Brotherhood and why. Instead of a mass of undifferentiated Brotherhood "supporters," consider the traditional distinction between core, swing, and opposed voters in the clientelism literature. Thus, a relatively stable core of Brotherhood voters are ideological supporters — mainly, but not limited to members — and will support the group regardless. The swing voters, on the other hand, could be induced to support the group in exchange for services, so long as their ideological opposition to the group remains below some threshold. The threshold, importantly, can and does shift. This, in turn, helps explain the swings in levels of support for the group and that the "coalition" can fairly quickly collapse precisely because a significant portion of it is contingent.

Further inquiry requires more data and, ideally, comparative perspectives, be they either cross and/ or subnational. It would also respect the localized and targeted nature of this dynamic — both because of resource limitations and the need to maintain some type of monitoring regimen. Finally, more formal theories of politics would also be useful to conceptualize and specify the general logic at work. Regardless of the new theories of Islamist social service provision these events will generate, the experience and behavior of Islamists in the Arab Spring should also highlight the shortcomings of and areas for improvement in certain core assumptions on which the study of Islamism is based.

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Rethinking Post-Islamism and the Study of Changes in Islamist Ideology

By Michaele Browers, Wake Forest University

The concept of “post-Islamism” has been at the center of debates regarding the historical evolution of political Islam for over two decades now. First put forth among French scholars (Olivier Roy, among others) who asserted that Islamism had failed, both intellectually and politically, and that Islamists were increasingly articulating secular or apolitical positions as a result, more recent iterations have criticized and revised notions of post-Islamism that are too closely tied to a historical narrative premised on Islamism giving way to something akin to secularism. Asef Bayat’s account of post-Islamism suggests that the anomalies of Islamic politics have opened up a productive, liminal space that is “neither anti-Islamic nor un-Islamic nor secular.”¹ He considers post-Islamism “both a *condition* and a *project*.”² The former refers to “a social and political condition where, following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy and sources of legitimacy of Islamism are exhausted even among its once-ardent supporters.”³ The latter refers to an intellectual and ideological project, “a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains,” in light of those changing conditions.⁴

What I find appealing in Bayat’s formulation is that the outcome of this period of “experimentation” (or perhaps better: “testing”) remains open, and it does not assume a “failure” that results in a secular alternative as a foregone conclusion. At the same time, even in Bayat’s formulation vestiges remain of the failure model as he seems to impute a relation between failing a test (as cause) and ideological shift (as effect) that seems questionable in cases where no

clear and identifiable period of Islamist experimentation has occurred (for example, in cases where Islamists did not achieve much in the way of social, political, and/or intellectual power) or where there has been a test of sorts but the outcome cannot really be categorized as failure. Further, despite the inclusion of an essay on Hezbollah in Bayat’s recent edited volume on post-Islamism, the character and development of that organization may very well call into question the notion of Islamist phase followed by post-Islamist phase.⁵ Might it be the case that under certain conditions — where an Islamist organization or movement emerges as a distinctly transnational phenomenon or where it exists as a minority with an awareness of the unrealistic nature of its claim to political power in a particular context, to give two examples — that the Islamist stage (in the sense that Bayat and all of us who see Islamism as an ideological project use this characterization) never fully materializes so that it can be tested as such? In other words, might the projects articulated by groups that have little to show in the way of exhaustion after a period of testing also demonstrate at least some — and perhaps even a large measure — of the same ideological and intellectual characteristics that Bayat associates with post-Islamism? Of course, this might only suggest the prevalence of precisely the condition Bayat identifies.

Hizbullah emerges following the return of a number of key Lebanese clerics after Iraq’s Baathists expelled foreign students from Najaf in 1978 and in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. The military wing of the Islamic Resistance that emerges in 1984-1985 bearing the name Hezbollah has to contend with the political and social circumstance of the Lebanese civil war. On the one hand, it is clear that there was an ideological dimension

1 Bayat, Asef. 2007. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Stanford University Press. 11 and Bayat. 2013 “Post-Islamism at Large.” In *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, ed. Asef Bayat. Oxford University Press. 8.

2 His emphasis. Bayat. “Post-Islamism at Large.” 8.

3 Bayat. “Post-Islamism at Large.” 8.

4 Ibid. “Post-Islamism at Large.” 8.

5 Alagha, Joseph. 2013. “Hezbollah’s *Infitah*: A Post-Islamist Turn?” In *Post-Islamism: The Changing Faces of Political Islam*, ed. Asef Bayat. Oxford University Press: 246-254.

to Hezbollah from the beginning. It can claim a number of individuals who were in Najaf when a Shiites Islamist project was being developed in the form of the Dawa Party and it is surely linked to the ideological project that emerges with Iran's Islamic Revolution. So too, by 1988, we see Hezbollah is embroiled in an ideological war of sorts that pitted secular Shiites against Islamist Shiites in the AMAL-Hezbollah war for control and which lasted until a negotiated accord was reached between the warring parties under pressure from Iran and Syria in November 1990. Yet, as the civil war draws to a close under the 1989 Taif Agreement, which stipulated that the Lebanese state was to be the sole authorizer of use of violence and for the dissolution of all militias, Hezbollah launched a public relations campaign to win an exception. The Lebanese state classified Hezbollah's military wing as a "resistance movement" (rather than a militia), which allowed the party to keep its arms and continue its struggle against Israel and, thus, to retain what one might view as its chief *raison d'être*. In other words, even at this early stage, the dictates of resistance to invading and occupying forces are placed front and center of the Hezbollah project.

It is unclear whether Hezbollah has concluded a "period of experimentation" such that we can speak of the emergence of a "post" condition. After several decades of work establishing an "Islamic milieu" in Lebanon, something well documented by a growing scholarly literature, and a number of declared Hezbollah successes on the "battlefield", such as the 2000 withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon and July 2006 War, Hezbollah's resistance project does not seem to have lost much of its "appeal, energy and sources of legitimacy." Since the end of the Civil War, Hezbollah has given considerable attention and resources to legitimizing its resistance project, using their satellite television station al-Manar and other media productions developing a (Party sanctioned) leisure culture, landscape and landmark production and even marshaling rather non-fundamentalist resistance art or "purposeful art" (*al-fan al-hadif*) such as music and dance to "advance[e] their own narrative in an attempt to gather support in Lebanon and the Arab world as a

model of resistance."⁶ And this is despite the fact that Hezbollah has been subjected to criticism from within and without: Hezbollah's legitimacy has been contested both within Lebanon and among Arab publics, as well as internationally throughout its history and, more recently, for political maneuvers that complicate an already fraught Lebanese domestic sphere, for its stance on and intervention in Syria on behalf of the Assad regime and against the uprising there, and as a result of a regional atmosphere that has imagined a Shiite "minority" as threatening a Sunni "majority" in the Arab region, at least since King Abdullah II of Jordan popularized the term "Shi'a crescent" in 2004.

Perhaps Hezbollah has begun to be tested since its coalition took control of key positions in 2011, though the power-sharing arrangement of the Lebanese political system and the actions of the March 14 coalition leave much room for blame to be spread widely for recent failures of governance. However, Bayat identifies post-Islamism a project as well as a condition — that is, post-Islamism must involve an intellectual and ideological project aimed at transcending Islamism, which seeks to set up an "ideological community" by implementing Islamic laws and moral codes and ultimately establishing an Islamic state "in which "more emphasis [is placed] on people's *obligations* than on their *rights*" and "people are perceived more as dutiful subjects than as rightful citizens" — and Hezbollah revealed many aspects Bayat associates with post-Islamism prior to 2011.⁷

6 el Hourri, Walid and Dima Saber. 2010. "Filming Resistance: A Hezbollah Strategy," *Radical History Review* 106: 71. On al-Manar see Baylouny, Anne Marie. 2009. "Not Your Father's Islamist TV: Changing Programming on Hezbollah's al-Manar," *Arab Media & Society* 9. Online at <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=728>. On other media productions see el Hourri and Saber 2010. On leisure culture see Deeb, Lara and Mona Harb. 2013. *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. On landscape and landmark production see Harb, Mona and Lara Deeb. 2011. "Culture as History and Landscape: Hizballah's Efforts to Shape an Islamic Milieu in Lebanon," *Arab Studies Journal* XIX: 10-41. On art see Alagha, Joseph. 2012. *The Power of Music: Mobilization among Islamic Movements*. IFPS/ CPWAS Occasional Paper Series, No. 3. On dance see Alagha, Joseph. 2012. *The Dance Debate: Discourses and Performance*. IFPS/ CPWAS Occasional Paper Series, No. 1.

7 His emphasis. Bayat. "Post-Islamism at Large." 4-5.

Bayat describes post-Islamism as “nationalist in project” as opposed to being pan-Islamist, and attributes to it “an endeavor to fuse religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty.”⁸ It is an attempt to turn the underlying principles of Islamism on its head by emphasizing rights instead of duties, plurality in place of a singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scripture, and the future instead of the past.”⁹ While Hezbollah’s project has always been more akin to an anti-imperial, anticolonial liberation project than a liberal democratic one (as is suggested by the language of Bayat’s account of post-Islamism), it is also the case that Hezbollah’s devotion of considerable resources to perpetuating an “Islamic milieu” since 1990 reveals their project share more with the “post-Islamist piety” Bayat expects to follow a decline of political Islam.¹⁰ As the work by Deeb, Harb, and Alagha demonstrates, what is perpetuated in this sphere is not an Islamist project as such, but an “atmosphere” and “space” of both piety and a culture of resistance. In the phrasing of Hezbollah’s 1992 parliamentary elections program: “The conservation of a unified Lebanon that belongs to the civilized world especially its Islamic-Arab milieu, requires our serious commitment to the Resistance as an alternative against the Zionist occupation until the liberation of all the occupied soil.”¹¹

Has Hezbollah’s project changed over the course of its now almost three decades of existence? Certainly the literature is rife with talk of the group’s “Lebanonization process” said to have begun in the 1990s, a claim that Harb and Leenders characterize as involving “a change from the principles of ‘rejectionism and violence’ toward those of ‘domestic courtesy and accommodation’”¹² Of course, many

8 Bayat, Asef. 2008. “A Future for Islamist Revolutions? Religion, Revolt, and Middle Eastern Modernity,” in *Revolution n the Making of the Modern World*, ed. John Foran, David Lane and Andreja Zivkovic. Routledge: 109.

9 Ibid. “Post-Islamism at Large.” 8.

10 Ibid. 2013. *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Second Edition. Stanford University Press.

11 Alagha. 2011. *Hezbollah’s Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 65-66.

12 Harb, Mona and Reinoud Leenders. 2005. “Know thy enemy: Hezbollah,terrorism’ and the politics of Perception,” *Third World Quarterly* 26. 183.

of Hezbollah’s external critics deny such claims, preferring to simply see the Party as consistent in its radical Islamism and terrorism, while inconsistent in its articulation of an ideology. Another, more interesting, study by Bashir Saade suggests that Hezbollah has never fully developed an ideology as such but, rather, works quite consistently and strategically informed by its remarkably consistent narrative of resistance.¹³

Joseph Alagha has attempted to deal with the issue of consistency and change by distinguishing between Hezbollah’s “political ideology” (which he locates in the Party’s 1985 “Open Letter” and maintains has only gradually evolved into its more recent formulation articulated in the Party’s 2009 Manifesto) and its “political program”(which he argues is first clearly iterated when the party contested Lebanon’s 1992 parliamentary elections, but remains flexible and has changed over the course of the Party’s history) — a distinction he locates in Hassan Nasrallah’s own rhetoric. According to Alagha: “the 2009 Manifesto delineates an almost complete ‘Lebanonisation’ of Hezbollah,” as references to an Islamic state and *wilayat al-faqih* are dropped and it gives “primacy to the national political arena for achieving national goals.”¹⁴ Yet, the Party’s intervention in Syria, which is not only highly unpopular in Lebanon (even among Shiites), but also both runs the risk of destabilizing Lebanon and is in tension with Hezbollah’s broader appeal as a champion of popular resistance to oppression calls into question such assessments. Most of Nasrallah’s speeches since the Arab uprisings began have devoted space to clarifying Hezbollah’s position. In regard to Syria, Nasrallah has repeatedly asserted that what is taking place in Syria is not a call for reform and change but an attempt to oust a regime that has been fighting with the resistance against Israel and the United states — that is, a reasserting of their actions as consistent with the resistance project.

In a forthcoming article, Melani Cammet and Pauline

13 Saade, Bashir. 2011. *Hezbollah and the Politics of Remembering*. PhD Dissertation in War Studies, Kings College, University of London.

14 Alagha, Joseph. 2012. *Hezbollah’s DNA and the Arab Spring*. New Delhi: Knowledge World Publishers, 215.

Jones Luong demonstrate that the key to explaining the ability of Islamists to enjoy widespread support is less about any direct effects of their welfare provisions, their organizational capacity, or even the ideological hold they have managed to garner.¹⁵ Rather the key element lies in an Islamist group's "ability to sustain and exploit the *reputational* support of their political advantage." In the context of modern Lebanon, Hezbollah's "appeal, energy and sources of legitimacy" were never really found in its Islamist ideology, which held little appeal or legitimacy in the context of Lebanon's diverse and largely sectarian-secular environment. Rather, it is on its resistance project that Hezbollah hangs its reputations, perhaps well

15 Cammett, Melani and Pauline Jones Luong. forthcoming. "Is there an 'Islamist Political Advantage?'" *Annual Review of Political Science*.

intertwined with but also perhaps less well subsumed by an Islamist project and ideology than much of the literature would have us believe. Does this make it post-Islamist? Perhaps what one should expect in this "post-Islamist period" is not the failure of Islamist groups or the exhaustion of the Islamic frame of reference for political projects, but the increasing proliferation of ways to do and articulate Islamist politics.

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The Brotherhood Withdraws Into Itself

By Nathan J. Brown, George Washington University

When Mohamed Morsi was ousted from the Egyptian presidency on July 3, 2013, it was clear to many observers, though not necessarily all¹, that political Islam was entering a new era — at least in Egypt, a country which had given birth to perhaps the most successful model of a formal Islamist movement, the Muslim Brotherhood. But it was not clear what direction that movement would take. Six months later, the features of the Islamist response are becoming a bit clearer, again if one focuses on Egypt. And they are cause for concern, especially for the part of the Islamist spectrum represented by the Brotherhood and its

supporters: The movement is showing signs of succumbing to a strange combination of paranoia and long-term optimism, tendencies that are very much fostered by a repressive and sometimes hysterical political environment. The trend toward the Brotherhood's inclusion as a normal political movement — a fitful process that had been occurring in a two-steps-forward, one-step-back manner for three decades — has come to a full stop.

In this memo, I will rely on my past attempts to understand the Brotherhood to probe the future. My purpose is not to use the past as a guide so much as to explain why I think the future is unlike the past and how Egyptian political life — and the Brotherhood as an organization — have already entered a dangerous period.

1 I participated in a recent online forum on the future of Islamism with a group of other scholars whose work I do not merely respect but often rely on. I found myself a bit of an outlier on the significance of Morsi's overthrow. See the Jadaliyya exchange in which I take the strongest position. "Roundtable on The Future of Islamism: A Starting Point," *Jadaliyya*, 14 November 2013, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/15112/roundtable-on-the-future-of-islamism_a-starting-po

The Brotherhood's Political Project

From the time of its re-emergence in the 1970s and 1980s, the Brotherhood had found itself drawn increasingly if gradually into politics. Dabbling in parliamentary politics gave way to formal alliances with legal parties (the Brotherhood being denied legal recognition prior to 2012) and then to a decision to form a political party in principle, with implementation delayed until a time when an application would not be — as eventual Freedom and Justice Party head Said al-Katatni told me in 2010 — a “death certificate” for the movement.

In the 1990s, the movement may have postponed the question of a political party, but it gradually gained more and more electoral and parliamentary experience. Those within the movement skilled at building coalitions, reaching constituents, crafting platforms, and participating in public life gradually rose in importance, taking seats on the Guidance Bureau. But the movement as a whole remained cautious about politics, making politics a virtue of necessity. Operating in an environment in which they would never be allowed to win, they described their political goal as “participation, not domination” (*al-musharika la al-mughaliba*). And the majority of Guidance Bureau itself, as well as the position of General Guide, was never signed over to the more politically inclined. This story has been told by many of my colleagues, sometimes quite well.²

This strategy paid off handsomely until the aftermath of the 2005 parliamentary elections, in which the

2 Perhaps the most comprehensive work on the earlier period, though hardly the only one, is Carrie Wickham's *Mobilizing Islam* (Columbia University Press, 2002); it will soon be joined by Abdullah Al-Arian's *Answering the Call: Popular Islamic Activism in Egypt* (Oxford University Press, 2014). I have tried to contribute to an understanding of the more recent period in *When Victory is Not an Option: Islamist Movements in Arab Politics* (Cornell University Press, 2012); Wickham has also contributed *The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement* (Princeton University Press, 2013).

Also extremely helpful is Michaëlle Browers's *Political Ideology in the Arab World* (Cambridge University Press, 2009); Browers is able to show both the reality and the limits of cross-ideological dialogues in Arab politics in the period before the 2011 uprisings.

Brotherhood took one-fifth of the seats. Feeling a wave of repressive wrath from the Mubarak regime, the Brotherhood leadership sensed that its increasing political involvement was actually exposing the movement to harm. The leadership shunted aside some of its more politically-minded members and hunkered down in a manner designed to preserve the organization through trying times as an apparently entrenched regime trained its sights fully on the Islamist opposition.

And then the regime fell.

Much of the Brotherhood's flatfooted response to events in 2011 can be attributed to the way in which it had marginalized its more politically-skilled members. But in January 2011, the movement was suddenly presented with the prospect of a dramatically new political environment, one in which its electoral skills would suddenly become more relevant than ever before. Indeed, the Brotherhood plunged into elections with gusto — but still promising not to forget its “participation, not domination” refrain, eschewing an attempt at a parliamentary majority and initially abjuring the presidency, and even hesitating for a brief moment about forming a political party before taking the plunge.

The Impulsiveness of Icarus

In 2011 and 2012, the Brotherhood's decision to re-emphasize politics seemed to pay off handsomely in the eyes of external observers. But the Brotherhood leadership was a bit more guarded, always looking over its shoulder. Yes, it took considerable pride in its ability to do well in electoral terms. Leaders felt vindicated that they represented the “silent majority.” To be sure, they did not plagiarize Richard Nixon's terms, but they evinced every sign of embracing the idea that the Brotherhood spoke for the majority of conservative, religious, decent Egyptian voters and thus, sparked resentment from the effete liberal Cairo elite and the nattering nabobs of opportunism.

But the Brotherhood fell victim to Nixonian impulses in a deeper sense: It began to feel itself besieged by a hostile

state apparatus and cultural elite, even as it piled up victory after victory at the polls. The decision to seek the presidency, the startling November 2012 constitutional declaration,³ the disinterest in reaching out to opposition, the willingness to deploy violence against opponents, — to be fair, the Brotherhood was often responding to violent attacks on its buildings and members and could not rely on the security services for protection — and the preparations to purge the judiciary were all indications that the Brotherhood had made the transition to governing party without leaving its siege mentality behind. In January 2013 a friend in the Brotherhood told me the mood within the movement was that it was 1965 all over again (referring to perhaps the harshest year in the Brotherhood's experience of official repression), neglecting to mention that the presidency was no longer in the hands of Gamal Abdel Nasser but instead Mohamed. In June 2013, a Brotherhood leader told me grimly he had no regrets about any of the measures the movement had taken, "Not only would we do it again, we *will* do it again if necessary." The Brotherhood's pride in learning and adjusting had taken a back seat to its feeling that time was on its side and against those of its hypocritical opponents. In April 2013, I observed that, "The movement's response to the political opportunities before it, for all its well-earned reputation for caution, has been to marry a vague strategic vision to a series of ad hoc decisions on how to run in elections, structure campaigns, form alliances, and pursue office and policies that betray more the impulsive ambition of Icarus than the methodical precision of a chess grandmaster."⁴

Political Islam After the Coup

The coup of July 3 should have come as no surprise, but it evidently did. The Brotherhood leadership stood in front of an oncoming locomotive convinced it would never hit or, if it did, that the blow could be deflected. And when instead

3 That document was one I summed up in an uncharitable mood as amounting to "I, Morsi, am all powerful. And in my first act as being all powerful, I declare myself more powerful still," in Kareem Fahim and David D. Kirkpatrick, "Clashes Break Out as Morsi Seizes New Powers in Egypt," *New York Times*, 23 November 2012.

4 "Islam and Politics in the New Egypt," Carnegie Paper April 2013, p. 8, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/islam_politics.pdf.

the Brotherhood's political leadership of the country was shattered, the movement did not know how to react. The fact that the collision caught the leadership unprepared should lead us to a clue about how to examine the post-coup environment and an important partial shift in how the movement's political role should be analyzed.

I have argued elsewhere that explaining the behavior of Islamist movements should focus a bit less on the intentions of the leaders and more on the environment in which they operate. I still believe that generally to be the case. I closed my 2012 book on the movement with the observation that the problem "lies not in their learning abilities (which are impressive). The problem is the lessons they are taught."⁵ But it is clear now that the leadership has absorbed a bitter lesson indeed, and that the powerful nature of that experience — of the brutal defeat of the Brotherhood's political project — combined with the organization's tight and inward-looking structure now suggest we need to pay a bit more attention to the movement's structure and choices. In an inelegant and unglamorous metaphor, I suggested that the Brotherhood behaves as bit like a toothpaste tube in which its shape is remolded in reaction to external pressure; I now think the events of the past year have frozen that tube in a manner that the next generation of Brotherhood members and of Egyptian citizens may pay dearly (and unfortunately quite steadily) for.

I further believe that it makes no sense to try to enter debates about what the Brotherhood should do as if the movement is in a tactical mood figuring out how to reenter an established political process. The Brotherhood is operating now in an environment in which it is making calculations according to something other than the logic imposed by a desire to return to the political maneuverings of the past two decades.

The organization's own structure and worldview inform the way that it perceives of — and reacts to — the political environment. At present, both the external environment

5 *When Victory is Not an Option*, p. 255.

and the movement's own impulses and organization combine to push the Brotherhood strongly in the direction of further withdrawal and paranoia, based on the combination of harsh repression, social ostracism, organizational involution, sense of being cheated, and long-term optimism that God and the people will eventually reward the righteous.

Let us take each of these factors in turn. The harsh repression has an obvious dimension: The movement's leadership and parts of the rank and file have been rounded up, put on trial, sometimes for preposterous charges, and members now must once again meet — if they do — primarily in secret. But there is a potentially even more profound way in which the current moment will leave a deep imprint on the organization: Thousands of the movement's supporters have been killed. In several conversations, I have been told harrowing stories from those present in Rabaa al-Adawiya or other sites, who carried bodies, watched friends being shot, and witnessed wonton bloodshed. The use of the four-fingered signal suggests that August 14, 2013 was a defining moment for the Brotherhood, one that is still now being deeply imprinted in the organization's collective memory.

And that leads us to the second feature of the current moment. The movement is suffering not merely from political repression but from social ostracism. The hatred for the Brotherhood expressed by so many in Egyptian public life (and, in my experience, reflected in many private conversations) is overwhelming and likely unprecedented. In short, the collective memory of martyrdom so prominent in the movement now is one it simply does not share with most of the society.⁶ Indeed, in almost all non-Islamist public spheres, the events of Rabaa fit into a very different story, one of the defeat of terrorism. Those who have studied the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would likely find such unshared sense of trauma familiar territory, but it is a new experience for the Brotherhood and a troubling one for Egyptian society. It is now undeniable that the Brotherhood now has a deep problem not only with the

rulers but also with the people it seeks to lead and guide.

But the ostracism is not total, and that is in a sense even more troubling. Within some circles of Egyptian society, the Brotherhood will find its sense of victimization vindicated. I was struck in conversations in Egypt last month with a variety of figures in religious institutions (mosques, al-Azhar) how much the tenor of discussions was different from those that took place among the general public. There is deep opposition to the Brotherhood among some in al-Azhar, to be sure, but there is also a wide supportive subculture within the institution as well as other parts of the religious establishment. One leading imam I spoke with, for instance, was unable to find terms to indicate the events of past summer in any clear way, showing discomfort about whether to refer to "June 30" or "July 3." The simple designation of a date amounted in effect a statement of political loyalties, and he knew he would offend no matter what he said. (Outside of such circles I have encountered few Egyptians who seem so concerned about giving offense.) A very prominent television fatwa-giver and a leading former official of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Salem Abdel Galil, appeared on a video distributed by the military that appeared to express support for Morsi's overthrow. He issued a statement after the video's release that he had not intended to take such a political stand (though it is almost certain that he was a strong supporter of the coup) and mentioned that he had close family members who had attended the demonstration in Rabaa. Egypt has not experienced a civil war, but the social scars do bear some resemblance to a time of deep social division. The embittered minority will find safe spaces in which to nurse its grievances.

Third, the Brotherhood's organizational structure — one which served its well in semiauthoritarian times in the past and then in the cascade of post-January 25 elections — is now likely to accentuate the turn inwards. That structure,⁷

⁷ The best works on the Brotherhood's structure are the more historically minded ones, including Richard Mitchell's *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (Oxford University Press, 1993) and Brynjar Lia, *The Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt* (Ithaca Press, 2006), I have tried to draw the political implications of this structure in my *When Victory Is Not an Option*.

⁶ I am indebted to Lina Atallah for this observation.

based on very tight, personal bonds — quite literally invoking a “family” metaphor — will likely, in the current repressive period, lead to a great deal of organizational involution (if Clifford Geertz’s term about Indonesian farming can be modified and deployed in a very different context). Brotherhood members will fall back on each other, recruitment will be difficult indeed, and bonds of trust and discipline will be more tightly drawn. These features — which made the Brotherhood a formidable organization but also one difficult for any system, much less a semiauthoritarian or aspiring democratic one, to integrate — are likely to operate even more strongly in the coming years. The organization will emerge leaner and meaner from this experience.

Fourth, the Brotherhood not only feels besieged and sullen, it also feels cheated. It performed well in a parliamentary election and saw the parliament dissolved; it wrote a constitution according to the rules approved by Egyptian voters and saw that document torn to shreds; it won a presidential election but saw its president ousted by a general he had depended upon. While the Brotherhood is slow to admit any misdeeds, if it ever turns a bit more self-critical it will likely — and with some justification — claim that everything it can be criticized for doing was done to it many times over.

Finally, the Brotherhood has always fostered among its members a sense of long-term optimism based on an encouraging attitude that God has taught righteousness so that the righteous will ultimately triumph. I do not mean to say that the Brotherhood thrives on being oppressed — I think its members are very much suffering now and not at all enjoying the current moment — but the bitterness is not total, it is joined with a faith that those who follow a path based on higher truths will not always have to wait for the next world for their reward. As one Brotherhood supporter, but not a member, told me last month: There is

no Egyptian who opposed the coup but came to support it; there are some who supported it who now have doubts. For him, time is on the side of the virtuous. I am quite skeptical that events are moving the Brotherhood’s way, but the movement’s members show few doubts. A strong sense of serene inner conviction coupled with a pressing sense of grievance is a heady brew.

I do not know what all this means in concrete terms, but I think little good can come from it. I am struck by the way in which the Brotherhood’s attitude in some past waves of repression — to buckle down and bear it, focusing only on the self — does not seem to be guiding the organization now. Yes, the movement is withdrawing into itself, but it is not directing its members to pull back from the society or even from politics. It is playing the role of an angry but active outsider. The attitude against initiating violence is deep indeed. I do not mean to imply that the Brotherhood is incapable of violence. I mean only that its self-image is one of being a peaceful movement if one that can deploy force in self-defense and that this self-image informs movement behavior in a manner that makes a full-scale Brotherhood insurgency very unlikely.

Most likely the movement will play something of a spoiler role, a hulking hostile presence outside of formal politics, a useful bogeyman for Egypt’s cruel security apparatus, and an axis of division within a society, which has always had an exaggerated sense of its own homogeneity and few tools or mechanisms for handling deep differences.

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Were the Islamists Wrong-Footed by the Arab Spring?

*By François Burgat, CNRS, Institut de recherches et d'études sur le monde arabe et musulman
(translated by Patrick Hutchinson)*

The situation and the current resources of the Islamist trends in both the Arab and the Western political arenas have been deeply impacted, in more than one sense of the word, by three years of unabated proactive Arab Spring protest movements. After decades of a relative status quo, the overthrow of several leaders, highly symbolic of the long winter of authoritarian clamp-down, plus the rise to positions of power of parties close to the Muslim Brothers, and the abrupt military counter-revolution staged in Egypt, have all contributed to set in motion or indeed to accelerate processes of deep change. The intention of the following paper is limited to attempting to briefly capture the latter, with special focus on the analysis of the archetypal trajectories of Tunisia and Egypt.

The Cracks in the Armor of Authoritarianism

The characteristics of the political systems born in the wake of the national revolutions consisted in their a priori denial of any form of institutionalized opposition, and, from the eighties on, more particularly targeting the Islamist successors of the Arab left. This widely shared habit of holding elections with a view, not to renewing the elites in power, but only those in the opposition, on analysis however brackets fairly widely contrasted national realities.

In Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's Tunisia, in Muammar al-Qaddafi's Libya, and in Bashar al-Assad's Syria — where mere belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood made one liable to capital punishment — the Islamist opposition forces were purely and simply consigned to exile. In Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco, the system tolerated their presence, under associative or even partisan form. Simultaneously, they promoted other religious groups (quietist Salafi or Sufi) in order to eventually weaken the more politically active — and therefore more deeply feared — movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. In the name of religion,

the Salafis set their faces against all forms of political commitment, while the Sufis accepted to grant electoral caution to the authorities in power. These highly restrictive conditions attached to the legal recognition of the Islamist oppositions, compounded by some very sophisticated forms of electoral engineering and by large-scale vote-rigging, have meant that, invariably, the polls have reflected a much diminished presence when set against real potential for mobilization. On the only two occasions on record when internal dissensions did indeed issue onto free electoral processes — the Islamic Salvation Front in December 1991 in Algeria and in Hamas January 2006 in Palestine — resounding victories for Islamist parties were only to encounter now all too familiar diplomatic and military patterns of response, both on the part of the losers at the ballot box and of their influential western allies. What is more, whether in Egypt, in Morocco, or in Jordan, the escapees who managed to overcome these first two obstacles, have had to endorse participation in legislative bodies which, whatever else may be thought of them are excluded from any real arena of political decision-making. The latter has been confined to inner circles — the King of Morocco's personal advisers, groups of military "backroom boys" in Algeria, and "the Presidential circle" in Egypt) — despite the much hyped facade of "pluralism" and remain far beyond the sway of any of the electorate's putative mood swings.

The Recurrent Mirage of the "Decline of the Islamists"

This absence of any institutional presence on the part of Islamist opposition forces (or those of any other political hue) during the initial sequence of the protest movements, was for a time considerably over-interpreted, both by journalists and many researchers. The hierarchy of the Muslim Brotherhood, immediately arraigned by the regime as the initiators and the main culprits for the revolt, could more correctly be seen as having delayed the moment

when it would come under fire as the number one target of repression by prudently retarding full commitment to the revolt. For several weeks, this low visibility of the Islamists was to be rashly interpreted as a sign of the historical collapse of their capacity to mobilize. Soon enough, however, polls and electoral ballots unveiled a more checkered reality — one that was a far cry from any such an umpteenth proclamation of “Islamist decline.” Differing dramatically from what was long allotted to Islamists by widely rigged ballot boxes, Islamists emerged as the dominant political trend in both Tunisia and Egypt. The only real surprise was the weight of the Salafi component, as well as by the extreme flexibility of its strategy, intermittently not always supportive of the opposition (in the case of Egypt, if not in Tunisia).

Diversification, the Price Tag Attached to Liberalization

The breaking of the authoritarian stranglehold unleashed, when it didn't merely legitimize, a double onwards thrust; first and foremost, one of self-assertion and, then, of diversification, at times to the point of scissiparity, across the entire trend. While the Muslim Brothers unsurprisingly took stock of the situation to finally reassert their clout on the political playing field, the relative weight of their Salafi “quietist” challengers — an electoral constituency until this day numerically unassessed, unknown — turned out to be unexpectedly significant. This abrupt bleep on the screen of a massive “Islamist” presence highlights the over simplistic character of a concept, Islamism. The latter concept turns out to be all the more wanting in the precision and functionality that has been spectacularly highlighted by the diversity of players whom “Islamism” attempts to embrace. This assertion of an important, very literalist Salafi trend among its ranks once again questions the relevance of the functionality of part of the “post-Islamism” thesis.

This serial breakdown in the patterns of authoritarian stranglehold subsequently brought the middle-of-the-way component of this general movement — namely the Muslim Brotherhood — face to face with the demands, challenges, and setbacks of practical policymaking

at a particularly tough conjuncture characterized by both suddenly soaring expectations on the part of the population and strong counter-offensives on the part of the supporters of the former regimes. In this context, the stance of the quietist Salafis has itself evolved towards diversification: One of their trends reneged on their initial refusal of all political action and launched out onto the electoral marketplace. They have not in fact granted priority to solidarity with the “Islamist camp” but rather to their longstanding rivalry with the Muslim Brothers, once the latter were in office.

The Jihadi scene has been diversifying just as fast: Some of its members — among them the emblematic Egyptian Abud Zummer, at the end of a long jail term in the aftermath of Sadat's assassination — have chosen to give credence to the new institutional system at the time under construction and to stand by it. Others have defiantly maintained an arms-length relationship with the system and refused to board the train of legalist integration. Progressively, the latter group have chosen to re-indorse their option for armed struggle both in Tunisia (Ansar al-Sharia) in spite of the fact that they were enjoying a climate more liberal than ever and more “logically” in Egypt following the dramatic endorsement of their theses exemplified by Morsi's destitution (i.e., the blatant betrayal of democratic promise by an alliance of the military, the liberals and the West).

The Ordeal of Power; Between Inexperience, Isolation and Counter-Revolutionary Resilience

The Muslim Brothers found themselves, under varying circumstances, propelled into situations where they had to come into power. In Egypt the Brotherhood failed to convince other trends of the opposition — whether Islamist or from the secular left — to join the ranks of the government. Though not elected at the same massive scale in Tunisia, the Brotherhood there has been forced (perhaps better put as “had the luck to be” forced) to share power with two tiny secular formations. Indeed, the Takkatol and the CPR have both taken on essential roles (from the presidency of the Republic to that of the Constituent

Assembly) in heading off the hostile reactions generated — both on the domestic scene and equally in the Arab and Western arenas — by the “Islamists’ victory.”

A world away from the dominant culturalist discourse of virulent “anti-Islamist” players, the nature of the challenges which the winners at the ballot-box have had to overcome show evidence, on hindsight, of being less a result of the downsides of their Islamist “political affiliation” than that of the exceptionally demanding conjuncture of the period of their rise to power. The case of Libya — where the recurrence of multiple tensions can by no means be attributed to an Islamist government, the Muslim Brothers having, for various reasons, failed in July 2012 to get themselves elected to the General National Congress — reinforces this assessment of the various “springtime” transitions, one which can hardly be said to be widely held.

The revolutionary exemplarity of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Ennahda victories over the heads of leaders considered to be irreplaceable fixtures has fed into the active hostility of neighboring Arab regimes — from Morocco to Algeria to the United Arab Emirates, which has been regularly accused, including by Tunisia’s President, of funding the opposition — under threat from democracy’s rising clamor. Saudi Arabia, ranking its adversaries by order of priority, has supported the Syrian Muslim Brothers (or the regime of Bahrain) against regimes or against opposition forces perceived above all as allies of its main enemy, Iran. But simultaneously in Egypt, Saudi Arabia has clearly mobilized against the Islamist winners at the polls, while denying any support at all to Islamists in Tunisia.

In Western seats of power, it was indeed to be their (“Islamist”) political shade of hue, which was to bring down a permanent inquisitorial suspicion on these “nouveaux riches” of the springtime ballot boxes. After having undergone a double setback in Tunisia and in Egypt, France’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs — long the diplomatic spearhead of the “struggle against Integritism,” and therefore, the thuriferary of the most appalling dictatorships — did an abrupt about turn. France

recognized, albeit late in the day, the electoral victory of the Islamists. Then took the initiative, flanked by the United States — and not without success of supporting a revolutionary makeover that implied consenting to considerably watering down its long-standing anti-Islamist creed — a policy which it implemented as from April 2011.

This substantial concession, however, was destined to be rapidly revised. First of all in Syria, where the rapid build-up of radical Islamist factions, expediently encouraged by the regime itself, has led to a real enough, but hastily disclaimed, disengagement from the armed Syrian opposition (manifested to an unprecedented degree by the Russian-U.S. agreement on the destruction of chemical weapons). Subsequently in Egypt, where France, on a par with the E.U. and the United States, unflinchingly condoned the rough ride given to the process of democratic transition (“a mere process of majoritarianism,” as it was portrayed by the E.U. commissioner in charge of Exterior Action), which carried the Islamists into power.

Domestically, the Brothers first and foremost paid the price for their long exclusion from power. They found themselves having to face up to the fact that technological expertise had, for several decades, been progressively concentrated in the hands of the political clientele of the fallen regimes.

The resilience of these failed regimes was to be made manifest by the more or less overt show of resistance put up by the state apparatuses (Interior, Army, Judiciary), but also by both the public and private press, which was more or less discreetly to set about undermining the elected government’s credibility. The survivors of the failed regimes were further very early on to contract more or less explicit alliances with the opposition forces, whether liberal (Tamarod, in Egypt), or trade-union and left wing (UGTT or Front de Sauvegarde in Tunisia). This convergence was all the more smoothly operated that the relations between Islamists and left-wing opposition, long passion-fraught, deteriorated rapidly. An elusive oppositional solidarity, in filigree at the 1990s hour of promising meetings between “Nationalists and Islamists,” was soon to give way to mere

electoral rivalry. The general collapse of the non-Islamist oppositions, of the “anti-Islamist” left-wing factions in particular, drove them to seek convergence with the former holders of power, including occasionally not being loath to play openly into the hands of the counter-revolution.

The Counter-Revolutionary Paradigm

The success of Egypt’s counter-revolution has profoundly reconfigured the situation resulting from the first two periods of the “springtime” onward thrust. The players, whether national, regional or international, have opened an entirely new phase in their political trajectory. Egypt’s Muslim Brothers have been thrust, apparently seamlessly, from power into clandestinity and their abrupt fate can hardly have left their counterparts in Tunisia and further afield in the region indifferent. Under close surveillance, the Salafis are embarking on a trajectory of support for a regime whose growing lack of popularity will inevitably have major repercussions on the base of their own constituency. The military upholders of the regime have renewed acquaintance with the root-and-branch eradication shortcuts of the authoritarian era. What is more they are eager to capitalize on the hostility generated in a certain number of their former supporters by the Brothers’ term in power. The West also seems to have

ebbed back towards its former long-standing posture: that of a “pragmatic” placing on the back burner of some its own democratic principles, to the extent of passing for blatantly opportunistic.

Jihadists are witnessing their darkest forebodings concerning the credibility of the democratic option of their Muslim Brotherhood challengers being enacted by the Egyptian military and their supporters to a degree hitherto undreamt of. In Egypt, but also in Syria — and no doubt in a good number of other countries where the bottom line of the bill to be footed for the Muslim Brothers’ scrupulous legalism is currently being taken on board — recruitment to their ranks is exponentially on the rise.

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Jihadism: Seven Assumptions Shaken by the Arab Spring

By Thomas Hegghammer, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI)

The last three years have seen a number of significant and unexpected changes in the landscape of militant Islamist groups. These include the decline of al Qaeda central, the rise of Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in Syria, the emergence of the Ansar al-Sharia groups in North Africa, and the mini-insurgency in the Egyptian Sinai, to mention just a few. Most of these developments have been *described* in reasonably good detail by observers of jihadism, but they have yet to be properly *understood* and intellectually digested by academics. What do these developments mean for our understanding of Islamist violence? This brief research note is an attempt to identify some of the assumptions, arguments, and hypotheses about militant Islamism that may need to be rethought in light of the events of the past three years. It is not intended as an exhaustive review, but rather as a thought-provoking brainstorming effort. In the following, I describe seven assumptions or common claims that in my view are ripe for reconsideration.

Jihadi groups have stable ideological doctrines that shape their political behavior in predictable ways.

One of the biggest lessons of the past few years is that jihadi political thought, which scholars like me have studied as “ideology” (implying something relatively rigid), is more fickle and malleable than (at least I) previously assumed. The most striking evidence of this is the involvement of many transnational jihadists in Syria and their adoption of a new enemy hierarchy with the Syrian regime and to some extent Shiites more broadly, at the top. This is quite a remarkable development, because in the past transnational jihadis showed relatively little interest in sectarian conflicts — Iraq only interested them when the Americans were there. In fact, between 2012 and 2013 we should have expected foreign fighters to go to Mali, not Syria, because after the French-led invasion, Mali fit the jihadi “civilizational conflict narrative” much better than did Syria. Personally I would argue that

nothing in transnational jihadi rhetoric prior to 2011 indicated that Syria would become the destination of choice for Islamist foreign fighters. There are many other examples from the last 10 years of such a mismatch between group declarations and behavior — witness for example the tendency for groups to declare allegiance to al Qaeda’s global jihad while continuing to attack local targets. Groups not only change views on strategic issues such as where or whom to fight, but also on tactical issues. Normative barriers on the use of certain methods can be broken, as has been the case with suicide bombings, or they can be reinstated, as has been the case with the issue of targeting of Muslim civilians. For all their apparent doctrinal rigidity, militant Islamists seem able to change their political views faster than we can say “Salafi jihadism.” It may still be that jihadis are rigid on questions of theological doctrine, but they have shown to be quite pragmatic in their military behavior. There are even signs that the pragmatism in some cases can extend to the temporary abandoning of violence and/or the adoption of non-martial instruments of politics, as we shall see below. The lesson of all of this is that those of us who study jihadi thought should be more careful when trying to infer group objectives, preferences, and motivations from ideological documents.

Al Qaeda has a grand strategy that guides the transnational jihadi movement.

This view is less widespread among Islamism specialists than in the security field, but it is sufficiently influential with policymakers to merit treatment here. Over the past decade, a substantial number of studies have claimed to identify an al Qaeda master plan or at the very least a sense of common direction for the plethora of militant Islamist groups across the Middle East. This proposition was questionable in the 2000s, but it was shattered by the Arab Spring. In 2011 and 2012 the ideological bigwigs of the movement offered only vague and contradictory

advice on how to handle the turmoil, while groups on the ground responded in a variety of different ways. The Arab Spring laid bare the deeply fragmented and regionally compartmentalized nature of what we, for lack of a better term, continue to refer to as “the jihadi movement.”

Al Qaeda-linked groups are vanguard organizations that don't do rebel governance.

For a long time it was true that transnational jihadi groups generally did not engage in social service provision of the type that nationalist Islamist militias such as Hamas and Hezbollah have done for decades. This has changed since the late 2000s. Over the past few years several al Qaeda-affiliated groups, especially in Yemen and Syria, have engaged in rebel governance and displayed a certain awareness of the fact that excessively harsh moral policing can alienate constituents. So far, however, they have not proved to be particularly good at it, but this may change with time.

Pro-al Qaeda groups are necessarily violent all the time.

This intuitive claim has been challenged by the emergence, in North Africa and Europe, of a puzzling new class of actors whose rhetoric is very radical but whose methods are largely nonviolent. I am referring here to the Ansar al-Sharia phenomenon in North Africa and the “Sharia4-” phenomenon in Europe (Sharia4Belgium, Sharia4Denmark, al-Muhajiroun in the U.K., the Prophet’s Umma in Norway, and similar groups). The two phenomena are not organizationally linked and they may have different causes, but they resemble each other in that they are pro-al Qaeda in word but not in deed.

The root cause of jihadism is a combination of indigenous malgovernance and U.S. bullying in the Muslim World, and addressing these grievances will undermine its appeal.

This assumption underpinned the argument, popular in 2011, that the Arab Spring would weaken the jihadi movement. As we know, the opposite has happened. To be sure, the Arab Spring never materialized in the way

envisaged back then, so one might conceivably argue that the first of the two grievances has not really been addressed. However, the second has been addressed to some extent, for the U.S. posture in the region has changed markedly since the George W. Bush presidency. The United States withdrew its forces from Saudi Arabia in 2003, from Iraq in 2007, and will do so from Afghanistan in 2014. Moreover, it supported the Arab revolutions, by helping remove Muammar al-Qaddafi, recognizing the Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt, and backing, however weakly, the Syrian rebels. The “America deserves al Qaeda” argument now hinges on two issues: drones and Guantanamo Bay. As serious as these human rights violations are, they can hardly explain the growth of jihadism in the past three years. Clearly, the ebbs and flows of militant activity are governed by factors much more complex than a few macro-level grievances. I do not claim to know exactly what does explain the recent growth, but reduced constraints, stemming from the weakening of the coercive apparatuses in the Arab republics, seem to be a major part of the story. The lesson here is that a narrow focus on rebel motivations — as opposed to capabilities and constraints — may produce flawed predictions about movement strength and behavior.

David Rapoport's “waves of terrorism” theory applies to Islamism and spells the decline of Islamist militancy in the foreseeable future.

Rapoport’s “religious wave,” having started in the late 1970s, is now in its fourth decade and should thus be ripe for replacement by some other *zeitgeist*, as were the anarchist, anticolonial, and leftist waves before it. Nothing suggests that this will happen for at least another decade. The Syrian war is currently forging a whole new generation of militants who look set to make their mark on the region for some time to come. The region is littered with jihadi groups of various sizes, many of which show few signs of imminent collapse.

Extremist varieties of Islamism attract adherents by offering a persuasive theological or political message.

Most of the literature on Islamism and jihadism conceives of recruitment as a cognitive process in which the recruit rationally assesses the theological doctrine or political program on offer, finds it persuasive or appealing, and joins. Some scholars emphasize the theological dimension of the message, others the political one, but the implicit mechanism in both strands of scholarship is some sort of alignment between the recruit's long-term aspirations (e.g., salvation or national liberation) and the action plan proposed by the recruiter. By this logic, jihadism has persisted for so long because it has been able to offer more persuasive programs than its competitors. However, a growing number of micro-level studies of jihadi recruitment downplays the role of doctrine and emphasizes proximate incentives involving emotions: the pleasure of agency, the thrill of adventurism, the joy of camaraderie, and the sense of living an "authentic Islamic life." In other words, there is much to suggest that jihadi recruitment is not just a cognitive process, but also an emotional one. Could it be that jihadism has persisted less because of its persuasive program and more because of the emotional rewards it offers adherents? Could it

be that jihadi groups, by self-identifying as traditional, dispose of a larger battery of "emotion-inducing cultural products" (such as rituals, music, poetry etc.) than do competing ideological movements of more recent vintage and that this helps explain part of the movement's relative longevity? The idea of jihadism as way of life offering short-term emotional rewards is consistent with the ideological flexibility noted earlier; to some extent, the particular political path leaders set for the group matters less when the foot soldiers are mainly in it for the ride. This is of course an oversimplification, as cognitive persuasion clearly matters. However, the cultural-emotional dimension of jihadi activism remains largely unstudied and offers a promising line of inquiry as we search for the answer to the question why jihadism has thrived for so long.

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The Islamist Appeal to Quranic Authority: The Case of Malik Bennabi

By Bruce B. Lawrence, *Duke University*

All students, observers and stakeholders in Islamist politics agree that political action is preceded or informed by thought: Islamist ideology is a crucial index to Islamist agendas, not just in the abstract but in multiple, variant contexts.

The thrust of this paper will be to trace, or try to trace, Islamist Ideology to its Quranic roots. “Where is the Quran, and what is its role, in Islamist ideology?” will be my central query. A major tome, *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics (OHIP)*, was published in 2013. It reviews eight figures as the crucial players in Islamist movements. They are divided into three categories. The two founders or trailblazers of political Islam are deemed to be Hasan al-Banna and Abul Ala Maududi. They are followed by three revolutionary ideologues, Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati, and Ayatollah Khomeini, while a third subgroup is dubbed “The ‘Intellectuals’ of Political Islam.” They include: Hasan al-Turabi, Rashid al-Ghannouchi, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Mohammad Khatami, and Abdolkarim Soroush.

Curiously absent from this list are any women and three or four prominent individuals who are integral to almost any consideration of Islamist movements and ideological profiles. They include: Mohamed Abd as-Salam Faraj, author of *The Neglected Duty*, Mohamed Husayn Fadlallah, the chief ideologue for Hezbollah, Abd al-Fattah Dukhan, the likely author of the Hamas Charter, and also, of course, Osama bin Laden. Ironically, bin Laden is mentioned in the final chapter of *OHIP*, Chapter 41, devoted to “al Qaeda and its Affiliates,” but he is cited only in passing and with no mention of the scriptural or ideological bases of his worldview.

The great need is to provide a broad gauged engagement with the full range of Islamist ideology in relation to foundational texts, with the Quran at the head of the list. An attempt in this direction has been made in another

edited work, Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, eds. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden* (2009). Here the roster of major thinkers is framed in five parts. Islamism is first reviewed as an emergent worldview, with four representatives: Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Abul-Ala Maududi, Sayyid Abul-Hasan Ali Nadwi, and Sayyid Qutb (Part I). Those who then remake the state in an Islamic mold are said to be four: Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Mohamed Baqir al-Sadr, Hasan al-Turabi, and Yusuf al-Qaradawi (Part II). There is no separate category for intellectuals linked to political Islam. Instead, we are offered three distinct yet related parts: first, Islamism and gender, with excerpts from Murtaza Mutahhari, Zaynab al-Ghazali, and Nadia Yassine (Part III); then a further section, on violence, action and jihad, with chapters dedicated to Mohamed Abd as-Salam Faraj, Umar Abd ar-Rahman, Hamas, Mohamed Husyan Fadlallah, and the Taliban (Part IV). So significant is bin Laden deemed to be that the fifth and final part is dedicated largely to him, with a concluding chapter on the most (in)famous of the 19 suicide bombers of 9/11: Mohamed Ata al-Sayyid (Part V).

The frameworks for these two works provide a vivid contrast. Both are largely devoted to Islamism, yet have markedly divergent notions about what and who needs to be studied in understanding the origins, developments, and outcomes of Islamist movements. Though many questions are raised by the unspoken assumptions in both works, I will pursue but one: the use of scripture in each instance. For some, notably Khomeini and Baqr al-Sadr, the Quran is no more than a backdrop to their exposition of a new revolutionary, often messianic appeal, while for others such as Abd al-Fattah Dukhan in the Hamas Charter and also Osama bin Laden in the “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” it is crucial to have ample Quranic verses, and to underscore their “clear” meaning. Equally fascinating is the appeal of Mutahhari to a large number of Quranic verses

that justify his central argument, to wit, that in the Islamic worldview there is equality, but not uniformity, between the roles of men and women, while the voices of Islamist female activists tend to rely less on Quranic dicta than on a narrative of loyalty to their relatives, many of them martyred, in the cause of Islamic liberation.

But equally important is what is omitted from both these formidable, and often informative, anthologies. Both presume a hierarchy of value, where those on the margins are downplayed or ignored. Among those nearly absent from consideration is Malik Bennabi. He is cited in *OHIP* in the essay on Rached Ghannouchi. Bennabi influenced Ghannouchi, we are told, especially during the latter's custody in the early 1980s. It was while in custody that Ghannouchi translated (from French into Arabic) "a booklet authored by Malik Bennabi entitled *al-Islam wa al-Dimuqratiya* (Islam and Democracy), which inspired him (Ghannouchi) to begin working on his most important work, *al-Hurriyat al-'Ammā fi al-Dawla al-Islamiyya* (Public Liberties in the Islamic State)."¹

I want to argue that Bennabi illustrates the hierarchy of value that informs our collective reflection on Islamism in the Anglo-American scholarly world. It is not just non-Arabic speaking Muslims who are devalued. Lower down the hierarchy of value, prestige and authority are those who speak in French or represent a Francophone perspective not easily translated into English, Arabic or any 'universal' language of the Internet age. Consider the biography of Bennabi. Trained as an electrical engineer in Paris, he now enjoys a rebirth in Algeria as both an Islamic loyalist and a radical modernist. Yet, after his studies in Paris, Bennabi could not return to Algeria immediately following the 1962 revolution due to his pro-Islamic stance, and so he lived in Egypt for a time before finally returning to Algiers, where he held weekly salons, or open meetings, in both Arabic and French until his death in 1973.

Bennabi serves as a counterpoint to political Islam, with its focus on the public domain of government and

governance, alliances and rivalries, and interests and strategies. Nor does Bennabi advocate the slippery project known as Islamization of knowledge. Instead of making modernity Islamic, he advocates revisiting and revitalizing the roots of Islamic civilization, beginning with the Quran. Bennabi focuses on the religious principle at the heart of every civilizational endeavor, but especially Islam. It is not enough to be Muslim. One must be a reasoning, rational subject, in short, a thinking individual, and the basis for all reflection begins with the Quran. His initial book was a stunning, if sometimes opaque, effort to apply Quranic dicta to the modern world. Titled *Le phénomène coranique: Essai d'une théorie sur le Coran* (1947), it addresses young Muslim scholars, especially those in Algeria, who have to seek foreign authors imbued with Cartesian methodologies, in order to satisfy intellectual needs, including their grasp of Islam. Predating Edward Said by three decades, Bennabi views Orientalism as threatening Muslims' historical orientation, and as a counter force Bennabi introduces a brilliant, modern, multidisciplinary, and comparative exegesis. He examines Quranic revelations side-by-side and verse-by-verse, specifically the story of Joseph as revealed in the Hebrew Bible and the Quran. In a theme common to all his publications, Bennabi extolls the virtues of the rational intellect and sees it as compatible with spirituality. On the one hand, he wanted to raise the consciousness of Muslims and persuade them to pursue a religious revival based on scriptural reflection, but at the same time he aimed at a non-Muslim audience, urging those of good will to acquire a better understanding of Islam, again through attention to its foundational scripture. *Le phénomène coranique* is an inclusive work. In its ecumenical dedication he extols exemplars "who showed me that man has his brothers and his enemies among all peoples and all races." While one could point to flaws in his Quranic exegesis, not least his overtly positivist methodology, the larger issue is his marginal, asymmetric position among those considered to be intellectuals or forerunners of Islamic reform or Islamism. It was, I argue, his linguistic heritage, above all — French more than Arabic, Arabic being the language into which he translated texts first written in French — that inhibited his reception in larger scholarly circles.

1 Espisito, John and Emad El-Din Shahin. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*. Cambridge: Oxford University Press. 217.

The conclusions I will draw from my limited inquiry are two-fold. Islamism has become a category of convenience rather than consensus for those dedicated either to the practice or the study of Islam and politics. Islamists differ among themselves, not only along sectarian lines (Sunni-Shiite-Sufi) but also in relation to other agents (local leaders, regional opponents, European and U.S. observers, the United Nations, and NGOs). Just as clearly, those who attempt to understand them differ among themselves about both the object and the trajectory of their study. At the same time, Islamism as an ideology is less concerned with the project of interpretive truth (what does scripture really say and how is its message nuanced) than with the asymmetric practice of modern-day politics, where Islam must always be the victimized, but also valorizing, other in every arena — domestic, hemispheric, global. But asymmetry also burrows into the a priori assumptions that shape analytical inquiry: It works among our subjects, but also among ourselves. Because it is extremely hard, it is all the more necessary, to give adequate, if not equal,

attention to those on the margins, not just those at the center of media/policy priorities, whether we are looking at movements, political or religious, whether our gaze is at home or abroad. Malik Bennabi is high on the list of those Islamic reformers who have been either ignored or devalued yet warrant closer scrutiny in assessing the multiple sources and the diverse agendas of contemporary Islamism.

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Is the Post-Islamism Thesis Still Valid?

By Peter Mandaville, George Mason University

Islamism has been undergoing significant transformation over the past decade and one is often hard pressed today to find a straightforward answer to the question “who is an Islamist?” This is in large measure a story of how conventional Islamism — as represented by the Muslim Brotherhood — has progressively lost market share in recent years to a diverse range of alternative Islamic socio-political projects. The classic paradigm of modernist political Islam was premised on the idea that one’s Islamist persona was expressed through formal membership in a political organization. In other words, being an Islamist was something one had to make time for as a separate and

discrete component of social life. By contrast, many of today’s Islamist alternatives are organized around spaces and activities associated with what social theorist Henri Lefebvre denoted the realm of everyday life. Here being an Islamist has as much to do with lifestyle — how one consumes, studies, spends leisure time — as it does with joining a political movement. The pluralization of Islamic socio-political space and the Muslim Brotherhood’s loss of monopoly over the claim to articulate an Islamic social order is hence a major force shaping the future of Islamism.

This particular account of Islamist politics is strongly

associated with the post-Islamism thesis advanced by scholars such as Asef Bayat and Olivier Roy since at least the mid-1990s. While Bayat is to be credited for coining the term post-Islamism (in reference to the pragmatist orientation of Iran's leadership after the death of Khomeini), the first substantive treatment of the theme is to be found in Olivier Roy's book *The Failure of Political Islam* (1994, original French 1992). In this text, Roy argues that political Islam of the sort represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and the broader *Ikhwani* tradition had failed on two accounts. First, it had never succeeded in becoming a mass movement capable of capturing significant vote shares. At the time Roy was writing, this was very much the case, with the exception of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria whose abortive victory occurred just as the book was going to press. Subsequent research in 2010 by Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi confirmed that most Islamist parties had attracted less than 8 percent of the vote in elections where they have stood — even when controlling for efforts by the state to interfere with the electoral process. Obviously this situation changed significantly in 2011 and 2012 with the strong electoral showings by Ennahda in Tunisia and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) in Egypt — of which more below.

Roy's second argument in *Failure* is even more interesting. He observes that in the process of adapting and integrating themselves into political processes in the modern nation-state, Islamist movements and parties have rendered themselves ideologically indistinctive. That is to say, Islamists have found it progressively more difficult to offer up distinctively "Islamic" solutions to basic problems of governance and economy. Despite the well-known slogan "Islam is the solution," Roy says, Islamists' ideas and policy proposals differ little from those advanced by other parties in the center-right of the political spectrum. As Roy puts it, "The political logic won out over the religious logic." Roy develops the post-Islamism thesis to its most mature form in a subsequent book, *Globalized Islam*, ten years later. Here he notes that increases in levels of piety in the Muslim world have been accompanied by a parallel retreat of religiosity into the private domain. In other words, Muslims may be more religious, but they are increasingly

disinterested in Islamizing society via politicized Islam. The will to Islamic normativity, Roy contends, is now primarily privatized and individualized.

But to tell the story of our entry into post-Islamism as one whereby Muslims adopt an exclusively individualistic and politically quietist disposition — in which religiosity and pro-capitalist consumption practices intertwine — would be to ignore other important trends at work in the changing landscape of Muslim politics. Other scholars have noted that the shift toward more personalized idioms of religion does not necessarily entail a rejection of Islamic activism. On this account, a desire on the part of Muslims to engage in collective action in order to change society toward some conception of an Islamic ideal is still very present. Rather it is the nature and modalities of that collective action that seem to be changing. Viewed in this perspective — as the changing nature of Islamic activism rather than its demise — it becomes possible to postulate the emergence of various post-Islamist formations and models likely to become increasingly important to the future of Muslim politics:

The rise of Muslim "new social movements"

Following the model of broad, de-centralized trends based on the advocacy and expression of particular values rather than aspirations to achieve formal political power — such as the green movement in Europe — we can point to the emergence and growth of similar manifestations in the Muslim world. The movement around the Turkish reformist teacher and religious entrepreneur Fethullah Gulen is a case in point, as is the recent upsurge in loosely linked organizations and networks grounded in Salafi Islam.

The collapsing of Islamic activism into entertainment & leisure

Today we can point to the rise of Islamic hip hop, urban dress, and other popular culture forms as new spaces of resistance and activist expression. Moving beyond an emphasis on identity politics, however, it is also possible

to point to spaces where the interface between Islam and entertainment potentially becomes more relevant to conventional politics. Islamic television programming of the sort pioneered by Amr Khaled and his vast coterie of emulators points to the vast potential for social mobilization that can be found by tapping into mass media spaces defined as “entertainment” and using them to encourage audiences to become socially engaged in changing the environments and conditions around them.

Platforms and hubs vs. formal organizations

The Amr Khaled phenomenon also points to something likely to be an increasingly common feature of Islamic activism (just as it in other domains of socially transformative practice today such as social entrepreneurship): a preference for working through platforms and network hubs rather than through formal, hierarchical social and political organizations. The idea here is that an activist can be most effective by offering a simple and compelling narrative or combined with a publicly accessible technology, such as websites and how-to manuals, that enables broad participation in pursuit of this vision. This model, typified by both Amr Khaled and al Qaeda, although obviously with very different end points in mind, succeeds by empowering individuals to achieve a collective outcome by aggregating their individual aspirations and interests in line with a broadly shared normative project.

There are a couple of commonalities that can be identified across these three distinct though clearly interrelated manifestations of post-Islamist activity. The first of these relates to the nature of the spaces and spheres of life in which they are embedded. As Asef Bayat notes, much post-Islamist activity takes the form of “nonmovements” — in the sense that they lack formal organization and rigid, centrally defined agendas or priorities — organized through the spaces and activities of everyday life. This is a vision of social change that eschews the idea of politics as an endeavor associated with, for example, the formation of political parties or the contestation of elections. Rather it focuses on the idea of expressing political preferences

through choices and practices associated with the relatively mundane: eating, shopping, studying, working, etc. A second aspect to focus on relates to the extent to which all of these newer forms of Islamic activism implicate what sociologist Alberto Melucci calls “networks of shared meaning.” This concept alludes to the possibility of building and sustaining forms of social movement premised not on a rigid command and control structure, but on a shared commitment to a broad, and therefore broadly and variously defined, set of principles and social values — perhaps operationalized through reference to an individual, a collective narrative, or a set of texts that all serve as a unifying “brand.”

We should note that not all of this is new. The activities of the Muslim Brotherhood over the past thirty years have demonstrated the potential social capital that can accrue from building an enabling infrastructure of social mobilization located primarily in civil society, community, and neighborhood spaces. Indeed, precisely because the structures of formal political influence have been closed to Islamists they have been forced to find alternative venues through which to wield social power. The principle behind post-Islamist organization in “non-political” spaces is essentially the same. But the post-Islamist model contains important differences. Rather than colonizing civil society because one’s true goal, formal state power, is out of reach — as was previously the case with the Muslim Brotherhood and in the wake of the July 2013 coup perhaps is so once again — post-Islamists operate through the structures of everyday life precisely because they view these spaces as important conduits through which state power is wielded. In other words, by defining education, consumption, and leisure in relation to a particular conception of Islam they directly confront the state’s desire to mold and discipline its citizens in support of a different agenda. Viewed in this way, we can begin to see certain forms of post-Islamist mobilization as efforts to challenge the state’s monopoly to shape citizens and their normative horizons in particular ways. This is how we can appreciate Fethullah Gulen’s gradualist, multi-generational project to produce a cadre of Turkish elites who are comfortable with religion in the public sphere as a deeply political endeavor. Similarly, this

perspective allows us to see why the Egyptian state began to view Amr Khaled's Islamically infused self-improvement program as a potential political threat.

Some raised their eyebrows at the post-Islamism thesis in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings given that the stunning initial victories of Ennahda and FJP appeared to suggest that we were very much entering the era of Islamism rather than emerging from it. But advocates of post-Islamism such as Olivier Roy maintained the core tenets of the argument, saying in essence that the Islamists who had been elected had no political space to implement a sharia-focused agenda and nor would such an agenda help to address the deep-seated socioeconomic problems that provided much of the impetus for the protests. FJP members of Mohamed Morsi's cabinet, such as Minister for International Cooperation Amr Darrag, talked in terms of IMF loans and foreign direct investment, not Islam.

That is not to say, and nor has it ever been, that Islamism of the Ikhwani variety ceases to be relevant. Within the realm of formal politics, as recent developments in the Arab world have shown, Islamism remains a potent force — even if today it is on the defensive. The challenges associated with doing real politics and engaging in practical governance will likely have a significant impact on the Islamist movement. Ennahda has had a major impact on Tunisia's political landscape but has also, in turn, been deeply affected by its participation in transitional politics.

There is much going on in the way of trial and error and improvisation. And clearly the question of how the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood deals with the aftermath of the July 2013 military coup will be of tectonic importance in indicating the future direction of the modern Islamic movement.

So is the post-Islamism thesis still valid? Obviously there are many scholars and observers who never accepted it in the first place. But if we are simply asking whether the core ideas that define the post-Islamism thesis have enduring significance on their own terms in the wake of recent upheavals, the answer is yes. This is because post-Islamism has never been simply an account of whether political parties with an Islamic identity are present and/or successful in the formal political realm. Rather, post-Islamism seeks to understand the relationship between formal Islamic politics and other spaces in which various actors, networks, and movements pursue social agendas defined in terms of Islam.

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Did We Get the Muslim Brotherhood Wrong?

By Marc Lynch, George Washington University

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The deterioration of Egyptian politics has spurred an intense, often vitriolic polarization between Islamists and their rivals that has increasingly spilled over into analytical disputes. Some principled liberals who once supported the Muslim Brotherhood against the Mubarak regime's repression have recanted. Longtime critics of the Islamists view themselves as vindicated and demand that Americans, including me, apologize for getting the Brotherhood wrong. As one prominent Egyptian blogger recently put it, "are you ready to apologize for at least 5 years of promoting the MB as fluffy Democrats to everyone? ARE YOU?"

So, should we apologize? Did we get the Brotherhood wrong? Not really. The academic consensus about the Brotherhood got most of the big things right about that organization ... at least as it existed prior to the 2011 Egyptian revolution. U.S. analysts and academics correctly identified the major strands in its ideological development and internal factional struggles, its electoral prowess, its conflicts with al Qaeda and hard-line Salafis, and the tension between its democratic ambitions and its illiberal aspirations. And liberals who defended the Brotherhood against the Mubarak regime's torture and repression were unquestionably right to do so — indeed, I would regard defending the human rights and political participation of a group with which one disagrees as a litmus test for liberalism.

But getting the pre-2011 period right doesn't let us off the hook for what has come since. How one felt about questions of the Brotherhood's ability to be democratic in the past has nothing to do with the urgency of holding it to those commitments today. Giving the group the chance to participate fully in the democratic process does not mean giving it a pass on bad behavior once it is in power — or

letting it off the hook for abuses of pluralism, tolerance, or universal values. That's why I would like to see Egypt's electoral process continue, and for the Brotherhood to be punished at the ballot box for their manifest failures.

So what did we say about the Brotherhood, and what did they get wrong or right? I wouldn't presume to speak for a diverse academic community that disagrees about many important things, but some broad themes do emerge from a decade of literature. For one, most academics viewed the Brotherhood of the 2000s as a democratic actor but not a liberal one. That's an important distinction. By the late 2000s, the Brotherhood had a nearly two-decade track record of participation in national, professional, and student elections. It had developed an elaborate ideological justification for not just the acceptability but the necessity of democratic procedure. When it lost elections, such as in the professional associations, it peacefully surrendered power (and, ironically given current debates, it was willing to boycott when it saw the rules stacked against it). By 2007, it seemed to me that there was nothing more the Brotherhood could have done to demonstrate its commitment to democratic procedures in the absence of the actual opportunity to win elections and govern. I think that was right.

And of course it had developed a well-honed electoral machine ready for use whenever the opportunity presented itself. Nobody in the academic community doubted that the Brotherhood would do well in the first wave of elections. Academics also pegged public support for the Brotherhood at about 20 percent, not far off the 25 percent Mohammed Morsy managed in the first round of the presidential election. They correctly identified the organizational advantages the Brotherhood would have in early elections, which would allow them to significantly overperform that baseline of support against new, less-organized opponents.

The Brotherhood's commitment to democratic procedures never really translated into a commitment to democratic or liberal norms, however. It always struggled with the obvious tension between its commitment to sharia (Islamic law) and its participation in democratic elections. Not being able to win allowed the Brothers to avoid confronting this yawning gap, even if they frequently found themselves enmeshed in public controversies over their true intentions — for instance, with the release of a draft political party platform in 2007 that hinted at the creation of a state committee to review legislation for compliance with sharia and a rejection of a female or non-Muslim president. As for liberalism, nobody ever doubted the obvious point that this was an Islamist movement with deeply socially conservative values and priorities. The real question was over their willingness to tolerate different points of view — and there, deep skepticism remained the rule across the academic community.

The academic community also saw it as important to distinguish the Muslim Brotherhood from the al Qaeda strands of extremist Salafi-jihadism that were the focus of the “war on terror.” The Brotherhood had a different ideology, a different conception of its place within the broader Egyptian public, a different strategic vision, a different social constituency, a different view of controversial concepts such as *jahiliyya* and *takfir*, a different view of the legitimacy of violence. Brotherhood and Salafi-jihadist figures argued with each other constantly, denouncing each other over ideology and tactics. Lumping together the Brotherhood with al Qaeda would have been a major analytical error with serious policy consequences. Academics helped to sort out such confusion, and were right.

I also played some role in drawing attention to a new group of young Muslim Brothers who were blogging, getting involved in anti-Mubarak activism, and opening up public discussion of the Brotherhood. They always represented a small group, far more open-minded and pragmatic than the majority of their peers, and many of them ultimately left the Brotherhood. But they were a real phenomenon, important at the time. I remember being attacked at the

time for casting these individuals as “bloggers” rather than as a Brotherhood propaganda campaign. But the performance of the individuals I profiled over the last few years speaks for itself: For example, Ibrahim al-Houdaiby has become an influential intellectual, Abdel Rahman Mansour was one of the secret administrators of the “We Are All Khaled Said” Facebook page, Mostafa Naggar became a spokesman for Mohammed el-Baradei's National Association for Change and won a seat in Parliament, and Sondos Asem became part of the @Ikhwanweb Twitter team. But it's also true that most were forced out of an organization that frowned upon such independence.

But getting the Brotherhood's pre-2011 ideology and behavior basically right is no cause for comfort given the dizzying and disturbing developments since the revolution. It has become clear that the Brotherhood was more profoundly shaped by its inability to actually win power than has generally been recognized. Almost every aspect of its organization, ideology, and strategy was shaped by the limits Mubarak placed upon it. The revolution removed those boundaries — and the Brotherhood has struggled badly to adapt. Its erratic, incompetent, and often incomprehensibly alienating behavior since the revolution comes in part from having utterly lost its bearings in a new institutional environment. The chance to rule forced it to confront a whole range of contradictions that Mubarak's domination had allowed the group to finesse.

The greatest surprise in the Brotherhood's post-2011 performance has been its simple incompetence. The Brotherhood's behavior in power and in the post-revolutionary environment more broadly has been appalling, strategically inept, and enormously destructive of the broader social consensus. It is rightly blamed for much of the social polarization and institutional dysfunction that has plagued Egypt's transition. It has alienated most of those who once gave it the benefit of the doubt, from Salafis on its Islamist flank to liberals to revolutionaries. I recall sitting in Deputy Supreme Guide Khairat al-Shater's office in late 2011 being shown

what appeared to be comprehensive, detailed plans for economic development and institutional reform. It seemed plausible at that point that a Brotherhood government would quickly get things moving again and establish itself as a centrist Islamist majority party, like Turkey's ruling AK Party. Yet it has utterly failed to do so. What went wrong?

One part of the answer lies in something else the academics got right: factional politics inside the Brotherhood. Put simply, the years immediately preceding the Egyptian revolution had produced a Brotherhood leadership and organization almost uniquely poorly adapted to the challenges of a democratic transition. The regime cracked down hard on the Brotherhood following its electoral success in 2005, arresting a wide range of its leaders (including currently prominent personalities such as Morsy and Shater), confiscating its financial assets, and launching intense media propaganda campaigns.

This took a toll on the internal balance of power inside the Brotherhood as advocates of political participation found themselves on the defensive against the more conservative faction, which preferred to focus on social outreach and religious affairs. In 2008, conservatives were declared the winners in all five seats being contested in by-elections to replace empty seats on the Brotherhood's highest official body, the Guidance Council; reformists cried foul. The next year, in new elections to the council again marred by serious procedural violations, the most prominent reformist member, Abdel Monem Abou el-Fotouh, and a key intermediary between the factions, Mohammed Habib, lost their long-held seats. Supreme Guide Mohammed Mehdi Akef, an old-guard conservative who had nonetheless maintained a careful balance between the factions, later stepped down and was replaced by little-known conservative Mohammed Badie. Over the next few years, a number of leading members of the reformist faction left the Brotherhood or were excluded from positions of influence.

When the revolution broke out, then, the Brotherhood had already driven away many of its most politically savvy and ideologically moderate leaders. Its leadership had become

dominated by cautious, paranoid, and ideologically rigid conservatives who had little experience at building cross-ideological partnerships or making democratic compromises. One-time reformists such as Essam el-Erian and Mohammed el-Beltagy had made their peace with conservative domination and commanded little influence on the movement's strategy. It is fascinating to imagine how the Brotherhood might have handled the revolution and its aftermath if the dominant personalities on the Guidance Bureau had been Abou el-Fotouh and Habib rather than Shater and Badie — but we'll never know.

A second part of the answer, I believe, lies in the genuine confusion the revolution produced at every level within the organization. Every part of the Brotherhood's ideology, strategy, and organization had been shaped by the simple reality that victory was not an option. The Brotherhood wasn't ready when that changed. It has proven unable and unwilling to effectively engage with other trends, and its clumsy rhetoric and behavior has fueled sectarianism, social fragmentation, economic uncertainty, and street violence. The thuggery of some of its cadres reflects either a loss of control at the local level or an inflammatory, reckless strategic choice — neither of which reflects well. Its decision to seek the presidency after vowing not to do so stands as perhaps its most devastatingly poor decision — one that shattered confidence in its commitments and made the group responsible for the failed governance it now faces.

This confusion extends to their broader political strategy. Prior to 2011, the group had generally engaged in a strategy of self-restraint. I recall then Deputy Supreme Guide Mohammed Habib telling me in 2009 that the biggest mistake the Brotherhood had made in 2005 was in winning 88 seats. By doing too well, the brothers had frightened the Mubarak regime and triggered a nasty crackdown. Winning wasn't necessary to the Brotherhood, since they viewed participation in elections as its own reward, an opportunity to reach out to voters and spread their ideas (a lesson today's Egyptian liberals could stand to learn). Their decision to abandon such self-restraint after Mubarak's fall has disastrously fueled fears that they seek

full domination, concerns which they have done little to assuage.

A final part of the answer probably lies in the peculiar mix of paranoia and arrogance that permeates the organization. The Brotherhood clearly feels itself to be embattled on all sides, facing existential threats from abroad and at home, battling entrenched hostility in state institutions and political opponents willing to burn Egypt to prevent its success. It is equally clearly utterly unable to appreciate how it appears to others, how its domination might appear threatening and its rhetoric inflammatory. This fits well with the life experience of the old guard that dominates the Guidance Bureau ... but is the worst possible combination for Egypt's turbulent, contentious and unpredictable new political sphere.

I don't think Western academics need to apologize for getting the Brotherhood wrong. Nor do I think the United States has been wrong to work with an elected Brotherhood government or to insist on adherence to democratic procedures. It would be tragic if we now succumbed to anti-Islamist propaganda or paranoia or threw away the hard-earned analytical progress of the last decade because of the current political maelstrom. But both academics and policymakers need to recognize that the lessons of the past no longer apply so cleanly, and that many of the analytical conclusions developed during the Mubarak years are obsolete. The Brotherhood has changed as much as Egypt has changed, and so must we.

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Rethinking Political Islam? Think Again

By Tarek Masoud, Harvard University

Before “rethinking” political Islam, it is useful to ask why we “think” about political Islam in the first place. What is it about this phenomenon that makes it a useful or interesting object of social scientific inquiry? To what extent does the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's acquisition of power, exercise of power, and eventual expulsion from power vindicate our past interest in the phenomenon of political Islam? And, just as importantly, what do those episodes teach us about how (and whether) we should think about political Islam in the future?

I argue that much of the scholarship on political Islam has sprung three motivations. The first is disciplinary. Events such as the 1979 Iranian revolution and the

later electoral successes of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and of Hamas in Palestine were viewed by some — particularly those outside the field of Middle Eastern political studies — as living rejoinders to two related but distinct bits of social science orthodoxy. The first is the so-called secularization thesis, which deemed the political salience of religion to be a relic of the pre-modern era.¹ In this way of looking at the world, the rise and success of Islamist parties was an aberration. To deal with it, many scholars adapted Emile Durkheim's 1951 narrative

¹ Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. 2011. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

of how social change drives individuals to suicide.² The literature on Islamism is thus replete with explanations of the phenomenon that are rooted in social, economic, and political dysfunctions that are said to so discombobulate Muslim citizens that they are forced, not to kill themselves (as Durkheim thought), but to do something almost as drastic — to seek refuge in the comforting certainties of religion.

The second bit of social science wisdom thrown momentarily into doubt by Islamism's power was the rational actor model — a particularly thick version of which holds that individuals should vote based on their material interests rather than on the basis of religious feeling. As voters queued up to cast their ballots for self-described guardians of faith, social scientists queued up to explain why such people were (or were not) sublimating their economic interests on the altar of fealty to Allah.³

There is not room in this memo to definitively resolve these debates, but the three years from Hosni Mubarak's overthrow to Mohamed Morsi's removal have provided considerable evidence that public support for Islamist parties (at least in Egypt) was neither an aberrant regression to pre-modern superstition nor a mass suspension of rationality. For example, my research on the determinants of voting in the 2011 parliamentary election suggests that the majority of voters for the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (*Hizb al-Hurriya wa al-Adala*) chose it because they believed this well-known and well organized party when it promised to redistribute wealth and shore up Egypt's crumbling welfare state. When it inevitably failed to do so, the voters' retribution was swift, as evidenced in the rapid constriction of the Islamist vote share after that initial legislative victory — from two thirds of voters to barely a quarter of voters in May of 2012 presidential elections

2 See Munson, Z. (2001), "Islamic Mobilization: Social Movement Theory and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood." *The Sociological Quarterly*, 42: 487–510 and Durkheim, Emile. 1951. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. New York, NY: Free Press

3 Apologies for self-citation. See Masoud, Tarek. 2014. *Counting Islam: Religion, Class, and Elections in Egypt*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press

—and the eventual mass movement to expel Mohamed Morsi from power in the summer of 2011. To further illustrate the fragility of mass support for Islamists: In a survey of 1,675 Egyptians conducted by the author in November 2011, more than 70 percent of voters claimed they had "some confidence" or were "very confident" in the Muslim Brotherhood. In a survey conducted for TahrirTrends almost two years later, in June 2013, the share of Egyptians evincing confidence in the once-great Islamic movement had declined to under 40 percent. Political Islam's place in hearts and minds was always highly contingent — not on religious irrationality, but on Islamist parties' real world performance.

The second reason we (and by "we" I mean U.S. scholars) studied political Islam is geopolitical. For example, U.S. policymakers have long fretted that an Islamist takeover in Egypt would wrench that country out of its comfortable slot in the U.S. orbit. This was, of course, and understandable concern. After all, article 2 of the Muslim Brotherhood's general bylaws declares the movement's aim to "liberate the Islamic nation in all of its parts from every non-Islamic power, to help Muslim minorities everywhere, and to strive to unite the Muslims until they become one community."

This is a goal that sits particularly uneasily with America's longstanding commitment to the survival of the state of Israel. In 2004, the man who would become Egypt's first democratically-elected president, Mohamed Morsi — then a member of Mubarak's parliament — demanded that then-President Hosni Mubarak expel the Israeli ambassador, cut all ties with the Jewish state, and support Hamas "financially and, if possible, militarily."

Mubarak obviously ignored Morsi, but when the latter man took office in his own right eight years later, observers had reason to believe that a new era of confrontation between Egypt and the United States had arrived. When Israel launched Operation Pillar of Cloud against Hamas in November 2012, one could have been forgiven for thinking that Morsi would do what he had asked Mubarak to do eight years previously and break with Israel. Alas,

this did not happen. Instead of arming Hamas during the Israeli assault, Morsi worked with U.S. President Barack Obama's administration to bring about a cessation of hostilities, earning praise from the U.S. president for his pragmatism and "engineer's precision." In fact, so much of a handmaiden of the United States was Morsi perceived to be that the *Tamarrud* petition specifically mentioned the president's obedience to "the Americans" as a reason for the necessity of his removal. So, if our interest in Islamism stems from fear that they represent an obstacle to U.S. interests abroad, the balance of the evidence suggests that the fear was misplaced.

The third, and in my view most important, reason we study political Islam is normative. We have long worried that Islamists might represent a threat to two things that we care about in the West: liberty and democracy. Consequently, we dedicated a great deal of scholarly energy to exploring whether Islamists might eventually embrace a more capacious view of individual freedom, and we have investigated whether they are telling the truth when they say they believe in democracy.

The brief experience of Islamism in power has given us precious little reason to revise the view of Islamists as fundamentally illiberal. Though the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies spoke often of individual freedom, the reality was that their vision of individual freedom proved to be one that was heavily bounded. However, it proved bounded not simply by conceptions of God's will, but also by the same belief in a strong Egyptian state, in the idea of "*haybat al-dawla*" (the grandeur of the state), that was an over-riding concern of the Mubarak regime (and which is now an oft-stated concern of the regime that excised Morsi from office). Thus, one can find numerous statements by Muslim Brotherhood figures during their period in power testifying to the inadmissibility of popular protest, to the courage and uprightness of the (as of yet unreformed) police, and to the necessity of obeisance to the armed forces. In this sense, though the Brothers were almost irredeemably illiberal, it does not appear to be their Islamism that made them so. Instead, the illiberalism that so worried us about this movement

was something more properly understood as residing within, and emerging from, an entire political system.

Related to, but distinct from, the view of Islamists as illiberal is the view of Islamists as undemocratic. The charge is best encapsulated in former U.S. diplomat Edward Djerejian's line that Islamists believe not in "one man, one vote," but in "one man, one vote, one time." Validating Djerejian's prediction, the Egyptian minister of defense and architect of the July 3 coup against Morsi, General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, declared in an August 18, 2013 speech to members of the Egyptian police and armed forces that the Muslim Brotherhood had revealed to him "that they came to rule for 500 years." According to the Egyptian novelist Alaa al-Aswany, Morsi "climbed the democratic ladder to power only to kick it away after him so that no one else could join him up there." Others, of course, counter that Islamists didn't kick the democratic ladder out behind them; they had the democratic rug pulled out from under them.

Adjudicating these charges is beyond the scope of this essay, but an examination of one of the most damning episodes in Morsi's tenure sheds some light. In November 2012, Morsi issued a series of unilateral amendments to the Egyptian constitution, in which he declared that his word was "final and binding and cannot be appealed by any way or to any entity," and that he was empowered to "take the necessary actions and measures to protect the country and the goals of the revolution." According to the scholar Jason Brownlee, this was the equivalent of an autogolpe, an abrogation of democracy every bit as egregious as his ouster at the point of a gun eight months later. Though Morsi was ultimately forced to rescind that decree, to many it revealed something fundamentally authoritarian about the president and the movement of which he was a part, and thus legitimated a popular, extra-constitutional movement to oust him.

The president's supporters, in contrast, justify his actions as necessary to protect Egypt's fledgling democracy against the depredations of the leftovers of the Mubarak regime, particularly within the judiciary. For example, the

president's supporters charge that Morsi had to declare himself above judicial review because the judiciary had proven itself hostile to Egypt's democratic experiment. Most notably, on the eve of Morsi's election in June 2012, the Supreme Constitutional Court dissolved the Islamist-dominated lower house of parliament that had been elected six months earlier.⁴ By the time of Morsi's November constitutional declaration, it appeared as if the court was preparing to dissolve the 100-member committee that was then writing the country's new constitution, as well as the sole remaining democratically elected legislative body, the upper house, or Consultative Council (*Majlis al-Shura*). Supporters of the president argue that the specific decisions Morsi wished to protect from the judiciary were those mandating the continuation of both of those democratically legitimated bodies. In this telling, Morsi's constitutional declaration was not an attempt to destroy democracy, but to save it. It will be for future historians to determine which of these two contending narratives is correct, even as the continuing constriction of Egypt's democratic space after Morsi's ouster would seem to validate the latter position.

⁴ In fact, it was the Court's dissolution of parliament that made it possible for Morsi to even issue his "constitutional declaration," as it generated a unique situation in which both legislative authority came to rest first in the hands of the military and later in the hands of the president.

Where does all of this leave us? If our concern with political Islam was that it represented an irrational religious reaction to the modern world, or that it represented a challenge to American power influence, or even that it represented a uniquely illiberal and anti-democratic force in the Muslim world, those concerns (and the attendant research agendas) can now be put to rest. Instead of rethinking political Islam, we may wonder if political Islam is the right thing to be thinking about at all right now. For, if the events of the last several months in Egypt (and the comparatively encouraging ones in Tunisia, which now celebrates the ratification of a liberal constitution) have taught us anything, it is that instead of fretting over what Islamists do, say, and believe, we should instead direct our attentions to the broader social, economic, and structural factors that have rendered much of the Arab world, even at this late date in human history, stunningly bereft of the prospects for democratic, representative, and accountable government.

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Islamist Movements and the Political After the Arab Uprisings

By Roel Meijer, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, and Ghent University, Belgium

One of the most fascinating aspects of political Islam is the relationship between politics and religion. The main question is: What is meant by politics and the political in Islamist politics? There is no straightforward answer to this question, but it is clear that the Arab Uprisings have made a difference. For the first time Islamist movements have emerged as full-blown political actors who have not been severely restricted by authoritarian regimes — at least not in the way of the past, with the exception of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria from 1989 to 1991. This has given us more than enough evidence of how Islamist movements operate when the political opportunity structure is in their favor and they can share or even assume power.

Many studies of Islamist movements have adopted a low-key definition of politics. Rather than a struggle for power, politics is regarded as a struggle for the recognition of a certain definition of the good as well as the norms and values that underpin a community, which is in the process of building a parallel society. This applies to the long period when Islamist movements were on the receiving end of politics and their struggle could be regarded as a form of counterpolitics. But it is hard to see this as the full story after the fall of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak. The minute those leaders fell and the Tunisian and Egyptian political fields opened up, the nature of the politics changed as well. From that moment onward Islamist movements could be held accountable for their “normal” political actions.

I will adopt a definition of politics from two sources: Pierre Rosanvallon and Chantal Mouffe. Their definitions are directed against totalitarianism and should be regarded as an attempt at saving politics from being swamped by ideologies that they regard as basically apolitical. Rosanvallon accuses communism of committing “politicide” and Mouffe argues that many ideologies, including neo-liberalism (politics reduced to economics), pursue what

she calls “antipolitics.” These ideologies disregard the essential ingredients of politics, such as the recognition of difference, acceptance of the clash of interests, and the legitimacy of dissent. As a result, they are incapable of understanding ways to solve conflicts by deliberation. While these ideologies strive for a utopian peace — found in unity, indivisibility, and fraternity (or the market) — they in fact promote repression in the service of a new communitarian whole, based on “excommunication or expulsion” of dissent.¹ According to Mouffe, “The opponent should be considered not as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated.”² The return of the political during the Arab Uprisings should have led to the return of the struggle for civil, political, and social rights, freedom, and individuality, within a context of mutual recognition. In short: the return of the citizen (*al-muwatin*).

The Muslim Brotherhood

In the two decades preceding the Arab Uprisings, many researchers observed that the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood was undergoing a major change. The Brotherhood was becoming more democratic in acknowledging the rights of women and minorities (Copts) as equal citizens, allowing for the establishment of political parties (*hizbiyya*), and recognizing the importance of elections, the principle of difference (*ikhhtilaf*), and the value of the rule of law. Furthermore, the Brotherhood had opened up to other movements, embracing pluralism (*taaddudiyya*), the civil state (*al-dawla al-madaniyya*), and other liberal conceptions through which antagonisms could be solved in a peaceful manner. In its liberalized form, Islam was no longer a total system (*al-nizam al-kamil*); rather it was subject to multiple interpretations and diversity. Nobody held a monopoly over the truth and the

1 Pierre Rosanvallon, *The Society of Equals*, Cambridge: MA Harvard University Press, 2013, pp. 113-23.

2 Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, London: Verso, 1993, p. 4

attempt to establish an Islamic state was shelved.³

Some regarded this trend as a major step towards democracy, others as a transition to post-Islamism (Asef Bayat emphasizes the change from duties to rights), where the goal was no longer political power but gratification of individual endeavors.⁴

Leaving aside the issue of whether or not only a small minority within the Brotherhood had embraced these new values, the question of what all of this meant for the concept of politics upheld by the Brotherhood was rarely asked — with the exception of the Grey Zones report of Carnegie Endowment⁵. Did the Brotherhood accept politics as a separate field of activity with its own logic and laws, regarding Islam as just a system of values and ethics, or did it not? One of the basic criteria in answering this question was whether the Brotherhood separated the movement from the political party. Creating an independent party would have constituted a first step towards a modern concept of politics because it would have been independent from the “sheikhs.”

After the Arab Uprisings we know that we have been far too optimistic about the changes within the Brotherhood. Although the Brotherhood may have accepted terms such as citizenship and civil state, and even the people’s sovereignty, and the “will of the people” (*iradat al-shaab*), it is clear that the Brotherhood did not accept politics and the political in the sense mentioned above. If politics in Marxism was erased in the blissful, classless society, the Brotherhood’s concept of politics was shot through with the ambiguous relationship between politics and religion. Tracing the political thought of Brotherhood General Guides Hasan al-Hudaybi in the 1960s and 1970s and Umar al-Tilmisani in the 1980s shows that

3 Roel Meijer, “The Problem of the Political in Islamist Movements,” in *Whatever Happened to the Islamists? Salafis, Heavy Metal Muslims, and the Lure of Consumerist Islam*, Amel Boubekeur and Olivier Roy (eds). London: Hurst & Co/Columbia University Press, 2012, pp. 27-60.

4 Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

5 Nathan Brown, Amr Hamzawy and Marina Ottoway, *Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Grey Zones*, 2006.

they claimed that belief (*iman*) and morals were the basic tenets of politics. The problem has always been that the Brotherhood presents political problems as religious problems that can be solved by *iman*, *akhlaq* (proper conduct/ethics), etc., not as issues that should be solved by deliberation.⁶ As Carrie Rosefsky Wickham has demonstrated, the Brotherhood’s members can hold totally contradictory views derived from the same source, such as Hasan al-Banna’s founding discourse.⁷ The same ambiguity is reflected in other terms that the Brotherhood utilizes, such as the citizen (*al-muwatin*). Is the Egyptian foremost a citizen with rights that can be freely debated, or is he/she a believer with vague and restricted rights?

These contradictions within the movement have become even more pronounced during the Arab Uprisings when politics for the first time emerged unhampered. The Brotherhood’s General Guide Mohamed Badie did use terms such as citizenship, citizen rights, and the will of the people, but it is unclear if the will of the people can contradict the will of God (or that of the Brotherhood). All three concepts blended into each other in Badie’s pronouncements, becoming a one and the same indivisible whole.⁸ This meant that even if the Brotherhood pursued elections to gain power and later claimed legality on the basis of these elections, it did this on the basis of majority rule not on the basis of outreach, building coalitions, and political deliberation with opponents. The Brotherhood’s basic problem was the acceptance of legitimate difference. Moreover, its concept of power was totally geared to taking over the existing state, not in producing a new civil or political order.

Salafism

Paradoxically, it seems that the more doctrinaire Salafis

6 Roel Meijer, “The Muslim Brotherhood and the Political: An Exercise in Ambiguity,” in Roel Meijer & Edwin Bakker (ed.) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, London: 2012, pp. 295-321

7 Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, “What Would Hasan al-Banna Do? Modern (Re-)Interpretations of the Brotherhood’s Founding Discourse,” in Roel Meijer & Edwin Bakker (eds.) *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, London: 2012, pp.241-248.

8 Roel Meijer, “The Majority Strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood,” *Die Orient*, Vol. 54 No. 1 (2013), pp. 21-30

have fared better than the Muslim Brotherhood in this respect. Doctrine, purity, piety, and asceticism even, are much more important to Salafis than to the Muslim Brotherhood. But this is exactly the reason why the Salafis can accept politics and are much more flexible than the Brotherhood. While the Brotherhood is a modern ideological movement that has acquired many of its traditions and ways of thinking from Western political movements in the 1930s (without apparently fundamentally revising its concept of politics), the roots of Salafism go back to the Abbasids and the problematic relations between the ulama and the rulers. In this political struggle the Hanbalis acquired power over religious doctrine while the ruler gained the right to determine politics – creating a separation between politics and religion. Though officially the ruler was the defender of Islam, the relations between the two and even more so between rulers and people was minimal and problematic. In fact, true Salafis abhor politics and want nothing to do with it. They will not go further than a discrete guidance (*nasiha*) to the ruler.

This deep distrust of politics is reflected in the predominance of religious doctrine in Salafism and the utopian sense of community associated with its own version of *politicide*: When everybody acts in accordance with the sharia, a just society is established and there is no need for politics. One must obey the ruler even if he is despotic because otherwise chaos (*fawda*) and strife (*fitna*) will reign and prevent the true religion from being spread. This distrust is clear from the fact that they never developed a clear political vocabulary: terms such as *fitna*, *wali al-amr*, *bid'a*, *kufr*, or *hisba* are not political terms, although they have political implications.

Even the so-called political Salafis, the so-called *politicos*, are not political in the modern sense of the word, because the doctrine of *al-khuru'j* applies only if the ruler does not apply the sharia and is impious, not if he is unjust, brutal, incompetent, in short a bad politician. There is no theory in Islam comparable to Machiavelli's prince, who is analyzed on his political merits not on his moral qualities. It is all about the personality of the ruler not the political system.

Ironically, it is perhaps the sheer weakness of political doctrine in Salafism that has allowed it to play a more important political role than the political doctrine in the Brotherhood has allowed. The tremendous political void that the Salafis never really filled has allowed Salafis the political space to react more flexibly than the Brotherhood and accept the vocabulary of the political (constitutions, citizenship, political difference, the nation). By accepting these terms the Salafis succeeded in becoming more pragmatic than the Brotherhood, which never reversed its claim to hold the political truth and make claims to a political vision and political allegiance. Because Salafis focus on the purification of doctrine and ethics and view the state and the political as corrupt, they were eventually willing to work with the secular opposition as well as with the military.

The major problem for Salafis is implementing sharia, which is more important for Salafis than for the Brotherhood. The political diversity of Salafism has been astonishing, ranging from Marxism to Costa Salafis to obedience to the powers that be. What is conspicuous in all of this is that Salafis' main political drive is the social. It is their emphasis on social rights and equality that drives their politics.

As with Calvinism, the main values of Salafism (obedience to a transcendental God, virtue, piety, honesty, civic responsibility, equality, and social justice) might be a better way of grounding one's politics than on the power of an organization. In this sense they are more in tune with the rise of the concept of citizenship as a central issue during the Arab Spring. It is quite possible that their egalitarian ethics and concepts of the good and civility will produce surprising results in the future.

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Beyond Islamist Groups: Suggestions for a New Research Agenda on Islamist Politics

By Jillian Schwedler, Hunter College, City University of New York

In the past decade, the study of Islamist politics has flourished with detailed case studies and the exploration of hypotheses about the formation and evolution of Islamist movements. Substantial attention has been directed to such debates as the emergence of “post-Islamism,” the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, and the cooperation of Islamist groups with liberal, leftist, and secular groups.¹ As a result, we now have rich empirical material studies of a wide range of movements as well as a growing number of studies that examine variations across movements. In what follows I am going to suggest two new directions for our research, but I wish to stress that I am not arguing against the value of studying individual movements.

I want to suggest some ways in which we can build substantively and theoretically on this work in ways that were not possible before this existing body of work had reached its current advanced stage. What I propose is that we should no longer prioritize the study of individual movements as the objects of our case studies. This is

1 On the emergence of post-Islamism see, Roy, Olivier, and Carol Volk. 1998. *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). and Bayat, Asef 2007. *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamic Turn* (Stanford University Press) and Bayat 2013. Ed., *Post-Islamism: The Changing Face of Political Islam* (Oxford University Press). On the inclusion-moderation hypothesis see Schwedler, Jillian. 2013. “Roundtable on the Future of Islamism,” *Jadaliyya*, November 14, available at: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/15112/roundtable-on-the-future-of-islamism_a-starting-po and Schwedler 2011. “Can Islamists Become Moderates? Unpacking the Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis,” *World Politics* 63, no. 2 (April): 347-376. See all Browers, Michaelle L. 2009. *Political Ideology in the Arab World: Accommodation and Transformation* (New York: Cambridge University Press) and Tezcur, Gunes Murat. 2010. *The Paradox of Moderation: Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey* (Austin: University of Texas Press). On the cooperation of Islamist groups see Clark, Janine. 2006. “The Conditions of Islamic Moderation: Unpacking Cross-Ideological Cooperation in Jordan,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38, no. 4 (November): 539-560 and Brown, Nathan. 2007. “Pushing Toward Party Politics: Kuwait’s Islamic Constitutional Movement,” Carnegie Paper no. 79, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February. See also Abdelrahman, Maha. 2009. “‘With the Leftists? — Sometimes. With the state? —Never!’ Cooperation Between the Left and Islamists in Egypt,” *British Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 1 (April): 37-54.

because by identifying “movements” as our primary object of study, we prioritize the sorts of questions central to the study of social movements, parties, and other social groups: how they formed, leadership, recruitment, membership demographic, activities and goals, ideology, success or failure, relations with other groups, and so on. We then structure our studies around how and why each of these and other factors evolve (or not) over time. These are great and important questions, but they also limit the scope of our knowledge and are unlikely to substantively advance our knowledge theoretically. Not all studies of Islamist politics conform to the “life-cycle” model, but a very large proportion of them do, including most of my earlier work in this area.

Of course there is always a need for new empirical information about movements and for detailed studies of movements that haven’t yet received close attention, such as many Salafi movements and aspects of Muslim Brotherhood groups that have received less attention (charities, local and municipal activities, scouting groups, internal debates, engagement with newly emerging groups, etc.). These studies are essential to maintaining and expanding our knowledge, but they are less to produce new insights or theoretical innovations.

Instead, I think we might advance our knowledge by pushing in two directions. First, I think we need to de-center movements, so they are not necessarily the object of our analyses. Instead of making the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt the object of study, we might for example explore a different sphere of activity and then see when, where, and how various Islamist actors (attached to groups or not) emerge in our analyses. For example, in my current work on protests in Jordan, instead of studying the protests that the Islamic Action Front (IAF) organizes or in which it participates, I shift my attention to make protests themselves the object of study. Using an ethnographic

lens, I examine particular locales of protest activities and note (among many other factors) when the IAF and other Islamists are (and are not) part of that sphere of activity. The protests around the Kaluti mosque in West Amman, for example, often include large numbers of IAF, Muslim Brotherhood, and unaffiliated Islamist participants and are thus frequently characterized as “predominantly Islamist” in character. But as confrontations with general police (*Amn al-Amm*, the Public Security Directorate) or the gendarmerie riot police (*darak*) approach, virtually all Islamists have exited the scene, leaving only a small number of leftists and secular activists, who stay on to push the envelope with the security agencies. Viewing those protesters as “predominantly Islamist” is correct in moment when the crowds are largest, but not at the (more crucial) moment of confrontation with security forces. Even though I have studied Jordan’s mainstream Islamist movements for more than 15 years, this dynamic did not become evident to me until I began to ethnographically study the dynamics of protests themselves; as a result, I unexpectedly learned something new about the Islamist movement that I had not recognized while I was studying the movement itself per se.

Another example might be to examine disaster relief activities. Rather than asking what Islamists are doing in this sphere, we might study the sphere of disaster relief activities itself and see when and how those who self-identify as Islamist or others of various ilk emerge and what role(s) they play. It may be that medical professionals who identify as Islamist organize relief efforts, but that the initiatives did not emerge from the formal groups or parties themselves. This sort of approach also helps to untangle — or perhaps move beyond — the tricky question of membership: who is and is not an Islamist. We know from many earlier studies, but particularly Carrie Wickham’s seminal *Mobilizing Islam* (2002), that the question of membership is not easily ascertained: Of the many people who occasionally attend Muslim Brotherhood events and even of those who share substantial portions of the movement’s positions many are not “members” of the organization. But then how are we to think of those gray zones? I think that by putting these and other

questions about “groups” aside for a bit, we could do well to explore these boundaries or gray zones at the “edge” of the movements, to explore what it means to identify with a movement, to join, to break off, etc. We do already note that most groups have internal factions or trends, but we do less well at following those flows in and out of groups and into and across other spheres.

As these examples illustrate, I think a “de-centering” of Islamist groups in our studies may provide rich ground for advancing our understanding not only of what Islamists do (or believe), but of the boundaries of the various groups and activities that we tend to routinely characterize as “Islamist” without much careful reflection.

A second way in which I think we should de-center the study of Islamist groups is to think about the politics of “Islamic” and “Islamist” politics, particularly but not only in a geographical sense. Here I want to think about the salience of religious identities and rhetoric across the region and indeed, globally. Thinking about Islamist politics from this perspective has less to do with the rise or decline of particular groups and more to do with the dynamics of various power struggles and institutional arrangements. Unquestionably, religious identities and affiliations are being invoked — and thus evoked — by a wide range of actors, each of who has particular and often clearly identifiable reasons for framing the region’s priorities and conflicts along religious or sectarian lines. Saudi Arabia, the Gulf monarchies, and Jordan, for example, all have clear reasons for interpreting regional conflicts in terms of a Sunni-Shiite rivalry. A strong Iran, from this perspective, is scary not because it challenges the Saudi-centric (and, importantly, pro-U.S.) pole of power, but because it threatens to create a powerful Shiite alliance stretching across Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq that the Saudi-U.S. pole will necessarily view as hostile. The war in Syria has become a proxy locale for some of these struggles, so the outcome of that conflict is seen to have profound significance for the future of the religious makeup in the region. The conflicts in Iraq are similarly represented as sectarian and religious in nature, rather than as the result of concrete and historical political struggles in which

certain actors actively sought to create such cleavages for their personal advantage.

Of course our goal is not to accept or reject particular positions — it is hard to tell someone who feels threatened because they are Sunni or Shiite that they are “wrong” to feel so, particularly when their families and neighbors have been attacked for their religious affiliation. But we can certainly identify the power struggles undergirding these perceptions, illustrating the extent to which “Islamist politics” is less about religion than about other kinds of power struggles. Thus while Islamist movements are involved in these struggles, it is crucial to note that the relevant actors include not only opposition movements but a wide variety of state actors — among them the United States. This is not to suggest that something such as “Islamist politics” does not exist — although we might rightfully question that — but to not assume that everything to do with Islamist politics is fundamentally about the activities of Islamist groups.²

In sum, I think that it is clear that a wide range of socio-political groups have emerged to claim different kinds of spaces that can also be called religious, many entailing everyday practices or frames of reference.³ The challenge is not to track the rise or decline of individual movements, but to think about precisely what is changing, where, and for what sets of reasons, without producing reductionist narratives, such as “Islamism is in decline” or

2 See Schwedler “Roundtable on the Future of Islamism”

3 See Bayat, Asef. 2013 *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (Stanford University Press) and Dupret, Baudouin, Thomas Pierret, Paulo G. Pinto, and Katherine Spellman-Poots. 2013. Eds., *Ethnographies of Islam: Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices* (Edinburgh University Press). See also Deeb, Lara, and Mona Harb. 2013. *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut* (Princeton University Press).

“Sunni-Shiite rivalries are increasingly bloody.” Sweeping characterizations are appealing in their simplicity, seeming to provide a clear explanation for a range of complex problems. We might do well to ask instead, who stands to benefit from narratives such as a rise or decline of “Islamism,” “the intensification of Sunni-Shiite rivalries,” and so on. More often than not, the answers will be less about the goals and beliefs of any particular group than about conventional struggles for power among a diverse range of state and non-state actors, within states, across the region, and internationally.

Finally, for the study of Islamist politics and indeed all of our studies of Middle East politics, I think we need to get out of cities and spend more time in smaller towns and in rural and semi-rural areas. This work is difficult to do on short research trips, as it is difficult to identify and make contacts on short notice, to build trust, etc. This work is also logistically challenging as there are few if any hotels, the ability to commute regularly from urban areas can be costly or challenging, etc. But we know so much about certain movements because 1) they will talk to us and 2) they are accessible to places we already know or like to live. For those of us who are currently unable to invest long periods in the field — due to children, partners, work commitments, financial constraints, etc. — we should encourage our graduate students to take on this work.

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The Shifting Legitimization of Democracy and Elections: The Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis

By Joas Wagemakers, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands

The Arab Spring has caused huge changes in the political landscape of various Middle Eastern countries, among them Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood briefly held power and various Salafi groups participated in elections and parliament — which Salafis had stayed away from before. Other countries in the Arab world, such as Tunisia and Libya, have also seen a greater political assertiveness among Islamists since 2011. This memo deals with the Islamist ideas on democracy and participation in elections partly underpinning these choices and policies.

Three Different Islamist Positions on Democracy

The main problem with Islamist views of democracy — found, for example, in the writings of Abul Ala Maududi — is the reconciliation between rule by the people (democracy) and rule by God through the sharia (theocracy) on the other. Maududi attempted to solve this dilemma in his idea of a “theo-democracy” by allowing the people to decide within the framework of the sharia, but not allowing them to overstep its boundaries. Not only did this include structural discrimination against non-Muslims (the leader could only be a Muslim, for example), but it also seemed to dismiss the possibility that one pillar of this system (the people) might ever decide against the other pillar of the system (God). This problem still plagues the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis to a certain extent; although they have come up with three main ways to deal with it.

Subjection of the sharia to the will of the people: Islamic law will not be applied until the people accept it. If the people are not ready for it yet, the (partial) application of the sharia will be put on hold until they are ready. This is clearly the most democratic position held among people within the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. I have not encountered it, however, among Salafis.

Shura as an Islamic form of democracy: Islamic law must be applied and the people have the right to consultation (*shura*), but only about things that are not clear from the sharia itself. The power of the people, in this case, is limited to issues that do not overstep the boundaries of the sharia, as in Maududi’s “theo-democracy.” There is considerable disagreement, however, over where these boundaries lie exactly, and many also feel that these boundaries should be relocated by every new generation. In some form or another, this position is held by many members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

A complete rejection of the idea of rule by the people:

Islamic law is generally quite clear and the people can only decide about detailed issues not decided upon in the existing legal texts of Islam. Those decisions naturally cannot transgress the rules of the sharia. These rules cannot be renegotiated throughout time by new generations since they are fine as they are — the crucial difference from the previous position. The rule of the people, in other words, is limited to shura, which cannot be equated with democracy. This position is held by the more hawkish members of the Muslim Brotherhood and many Salafis. This group differs on whether or not to participate in a less-than-Islamic system, which has to do with elections.

Three Different Islamist Positions on Elections

Before the Arab Spring, Jihadi-Salafis often rejected elections in general since elections allow the majority to rule, which is fundamentally wrong — “the truth,” not whatever the majority feels is right, should simply be applied. Since the Arab Spring, however, several Jihadi-Salafis, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abu Basir al-Tartusi and Abul Mundhir al-Shinqiti, have indicated that while they reject the *philosophy* of democracy (i.e., rule by the people instead of by God), they do not reject the *means*

of democracy (i.e., elections, term limits, correcting the ruler where necessary, a limited role for the people, etc.). Apart from a complete rejection of election because of the aforementioned reason, this has led to three different positions among Islamists on elections.

Complete acceptance on both legislative and executive levels: This position has long been widely held among members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who believe that running for parliament and the presidency are both acceptable. Participation in government is also justified in their view. Although exceptions exist (e.g., Hasan al-Turabi, attorney general in Sudan), it speaks for itself that most Sunni Islamists in the Arab world simply never had the chance to participate in elections for president prior to the Arab Spring. Some politically minded Salafis have also held this view for some time (e.g., in Lebanon) while others have shown that they hold the same position since the Arab Spring (e.g., Hazim Abu Ismail in Egypt).

Acceptance on legislative level only: Some hawkish members of the Muslim Brotherhood (e.g., Muhammad Abu Faris in Jordan) accept running for parliament as a legitimate way to influence policy in an Islamist way, while refusing to be part of the government and its inevitably “un-Islamic” policies. This would be different if there were a “genuinely Islamic” government, of course, but this has not happened yet. Others (e.g., quietist Salafi scholars like Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani and his followers) do not believe in actively nominating candidates for parliament since they believe the time is not yet ripe for this, but they do accept supporting and voting for “good” Islamist groups if they are a less bad alternative to other political parties or if they can limit the influence of less desirable MPs. As such, quietist Salafis who hold this position have supported the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria and Sunni parties in Bahrain;

Acceptance on executive levels: This is a rare but interesting position. It was proposed by the Syrian-British Jihadi-Salafi scholar Abu Basir al-Tartusi, who supported Hazim Abu Ismail, an Egyptian Salafi candidate for president. Tartusi stated that one must not become

involved in “un-Islamic” legislation and should therefore shun parliament, but running for president (being a local leader subject to an eventual caliphate) was allowed.

Ideological Shifts among Islamists

The (partial) acceptance of democracy among Islamists, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood, has been a long process that has been influenced mainly by local circumstances and international Islamist discourse and is unlikely to change drastically after, for example, the coup in Egypt. In other words, democratically minded Muslim Brotherhood members are unlikely to dismiss democracy altogether now that their effort to rule Egypt has been thwarted. People who were not too keen on democracy all along, however, will likely feel vindicated. Recent events in Egypt may also sway some Brothers who were always doubtful about democracy’s merits. Not all Islamists’ decisions related to democracy are based on such long processes, however. Some decisions — like the Salafi Nur Party’s participation in the Egyptian elections after the fall of Mubarak — may probably be more easily turned back because it was not rooted in a decades-long thought process but rather in a pragmatic belief that now was the chance to go into politics.

This means that Muslim Brothers who are open to participation in elections and watered-down forms of democracy may be willing to engage in politics even further if given the chance to do so. From this position of greater political involvement, they may then work on a genuine acceptance of democracy, a stance that some of their fellow Brothers have already adopted. This could even apply to Jihadi-Salafi groups, even though the latter are the most adamant in their rejection of democracy. To be sure, al Qaeda members are not about to become Jeffersonian democrats, but if the Arab world ever becomes open enough to allow such groups to express their contention through electoral politics and parliament, they might just do that. Some might argue that this would undercut al Qaeda members’ *raison d’être* (jihad), but I would argue that it is much more a general sense of unease about their own regimes and Western influence that fuels such groups.

If al Qaeda members realize that these issues be contested by other means than fighting and terrorism, they might eventually run for parliament too.

Conclusion

What is clear is that the different positions on democracy and elections form a continuum: They are not strictly separated but merge into each other and can be (and are) adopted by both the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis. Ideological shifts can be seen in the form of slow but genuine movements across positions over a long period of time as well as in the form of quick but superficial movement across positions when political circumstances change, such as after the Arab Spring. The latter can accommodate the former, meaning that positions

can change, even for Jihadi-Salafis. If adherents to the ideology of al Qaeda ever decide to continue their fight by parliamentary means — unlikely as it seems right now — they will find that the justifications for doing so have already been thought of and are simply theirs for the taking.

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Rethinking Islamist Politics

By Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, Emory University

What is the future of Islamist movement studies? What central trends and issues merit closer attention, and what are the conceptual and empirical challenges we are likely to encounter in our efforts to investigate them? In this memo, I offer a few reflections in the hope of contributing to a wider discussion.

Let me begin with a point that brooks no disagreement here, but which has yet to be fully absorbed by elected public officials, the media, and the wider public in the United States. And that is that not all Islamists are the same. The Islamic movement sector encompasses Sunni and Shiite groups, national liberation movements and movements primarily oriented toward domestic reform, Salafis and non-Salafis, jihadists and non-jihadists, Arabs and non-Arabs, and many other vectors of differentiation.

Such heterogeneity makes any grand generalizations about the broader purposes of Islamist groups, as well as their internal dynamics, operational strategies, and immediate goals, problematic at best and nonsensical at worst.

Going deeper, we find differentiation and complexity within Islamist organizations as well. Much of the literature on Arab politics has tended to treat the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups as unitary players in a multi-actor field encompassing the regime, the military, and other organized civilian groups. The focus has typically been on how the agendas and tactical choices of Islamist groups are shaped by the wider political environment in which they are embedded, tracking, for example, how they have responded to the different institutional cues associated with state policies of

repression, accommodation, and indifference. By contrast, the complex and murky terrain of politics within Islamist groups has remained, to a large degree, *terra incognita*.

In particular, the nature of internal factions, the (shifting) balance of power among them, and the issues of ideology, strategy, and group practice that have emerged as central pivots of debate have yet to be mapped out with any precision. The same can be said about other key features of Islamist movement organization and dynamics. For example, Islamist groups' sources of funding, their methods of recruitment, socialization, training and vetting of new members, and their processes for selecting leaders, allocating resources, and formulating policy remain opaque.

Likewise, the distribution of power among the executive, legislative, and administrative arms of Islamist groups — between their national and local branch offices and between Islamist movement organizations (*jama'iyat*) and their political arms — remains unclear. Finally, we still know very little about how elected Islamist representatives in parliament relate to the constituents in their home districts. Such gaps in our knowledge expose the risibility of the gross overgeneralizations and simplifications that characterize much of the public discourse about Islamist groups in the West. Indeed, the closer and the longer one has studied an Islamist movement organization like the Muslim Brotherhood, the fuzzier the facts become, and the more obvious it becomes that what we know is dwarfed by what we don't know by a wide margin.

What are the causes of such knowledge gaps, and what are their broader implications? Let me begin with the causes. First, it has been difficult for Western researchers to gain access to unfiltered information about Islamist groups, i.e., by observing their day-to-day operations over a sustained time period. It is difficult to imagine the leaders of an Islamist group permitting a movement outsider — let alone a Westerner — to sit in on important policy meetings or witness an internal vote. Likewise, Islamist leaders are reluctant to share information about membership and finances, which, in the wrong hands, could compromise their organizational survival. As a

result, physical documentation — membership rolls, budgets, charters, and vote tallies — is often missing or inaccessible. This is particularly true for a group like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, which for most of its history has remained technically illegal and endeavored to operate under the radar of the state authorities. More broadly, the Western research tradition, predicated on the values of data collection and transparency, is an exotic bird, an alien species, in the context of ongoing struggle between authoritarian regime leaders and their opponents.

At the same time, the deficiencies in our knowledge base are in part a consequence of our own research choices. These include the bias of most Western researchers (myself included) to focus their attention on national leaders and dynamics over local ones, to the point that our exposure to how such groups operate rarely transcends the confines of their headquarters in the capital city. In addition, we too often content ourselves with interviewing — and deriving the bulk of our information from — those Islamist leaders keenest to speak with us, rather than pushing for access to those who regard our agendas with the greatest suspicion. As a result, we end up with a depiction of how Islamist groups function from one point of view, without the means to corroborate its validity. Finally, the bureaucratic red tape, the logistical challenges, the linguistic demands, and the sheer amount of time and energy required to track down key informants and persuade them to be interviewed, as well as the expenses and the time demands associated with sustained fieldwork, create a situation in which the number of researchers willing and able to fill existing knowledge gaps is quite small.

So why, one might reasonably ask, does all this matter? Because, I would argue, without a clearer picture of what is going on within Islamist groups, we lack the tools to assess how and why Islamist leaders choose the path they do at, especially at critical junctures when a number of alternative paths are available. Indeed, as long as we continue to study Islamist groups “at a distance,” their actions will remain open to conflicting interpretations, and we will lack the data necessary to adjudicate among them.

By way of example, consider the conflicting depictions of Mohamed Morsi's brief tenure as president in Egypt. A first pivot of debate concerns the locus of decision-making authority within the Brotherhood after its ascent to the heights of state power. In particular, to what extent was President Morsi acting in consultation with — or implementing explicit directives from — members of the Brotherhood's Guidance Bureau? What kinds of communication flows and modalities of influence operated among the President, his close advisors, the Guidance Bureau, and the Freedom and Justice Party's senior leadership? We can pose these questions in general, as well as with respect to the Brotherhood's policy choices at critical junctures in Egypt's transition. For example, when President Morsi issued the fateful edict placing his actions above judicial review in November 2012, to what extent was he acting alone, under direct instructions from the Guidance Bureau, or with the backing of a consensus within the Brotherhood movement sector as a whole? The same questions can be posed with respect to Morsi's defiance in the face of mass protests and a military ultimatum last summer, and following his ouster, the decision to occupy the square near Rabaa al-Adawiya mosque in defiance of government orders, setting the stage for the military's clearance of the area by force. Without a deeper understanding of the Brotherhood's internal dynamics, including a clearer sense of who was directly involved in setting its agenda, with what motivations, and with what level of broader support within movement circles, it is difficult to ascertain whether, when, and how decisions made by Brotherhood leaders occupying different positions in the organization contributed to the group's downfall.

Since Morsi's ouster and the interim government's crackdown on the Brotherhood — involving the arrests of hundreds of its leaders, the freezing of its assets, and the banning of all of its activities — the obstacles to gathering accurate information have increased exponentially. As a result, we know very little about how the Brotherhood's senior leadership is reacting to the siege, and what cleavages and fissures have emerged among them. Likewise, we have little sense of how Brotherhood

members are processing Morsi's ouster, and who and how many hold Morsi and other top decision-makers in the group accountable for its latest setbacks. More broadly, we don't have a clear sense of whether the Brotherhood's ordeal has intensified group norms of solidarity and loyalty to existing leaders, fueled calls for reform, and/or spurred radicalization and calls for violence. Analysis of such issues will be difficult as long as so many of the Brotherhood's core leadership remain in state custody or on the run. But pieces of the picture can be gleaned from interviews with Egyptian researchers, journalists, civil society activists, and Brotherhood members with direct knowledge of emergent trends in movement circles.

To sum up, one of the most striking features of public discourse on Islamist groups in the West is that those who know the least are the most inclined to issue sweeping pronouncements about such groups with the highest degree of confidence. Even a cursory glance at the gross distortions blithely marketed as truth on conservative U.S. television stations and radio networks is sufficient to underscore this point. By contrast, those of us who have been studying and interacting with leaders of Islamist groups for years are typically the first to acknowledge that our understanding of many of the most important dimensions of Islamist movement dynamics remains sketchy and incomplete. Even studies, like my own, that draw on intensive fieldwork, have only managed to scratch the surface of the complex terrain of relationships, processes, and shifting tides of influence and power within the Muslim Brotherhood, Ennahda, the Justice and Development Party, the Islamic Action Front, and other Islamist groups in the Arab world.

This is an exciting time in the field of Islamist movement studies, as there are many new and important questions to explore. For those who study mainstream Islamist groups in the Arab world, one of the key issues meriting further analysis is when and why the integration of Islamists into the democratic process succeeds or fails, a question inviting comparison of various experiments in integration before and after the Arab Spring in Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Kuwait,

and Yemen. And of course, the definition of “success” or “failure,” as much as Islamist groups’ underlying dynamics, requires further elaboration. In addition, the time has come for a critical assessment of the impact of rational choice analysis on the study of Islamist groups. There is no doubt that rational choice offers a useful set of tools for analyzing the behavior of political actors, Islamists included. Yet, due in part to the influence of rational choice as the reigning paradigm in the discipline of political science, the role of culture, values, and ideological commitments as drivers of political action remain under-described and under-theorized. How are Islamist actors different from other actors who are not motivated by religious commitments? How do religious commitments interact with other personal motivations, and with strategic considerations of partisan advantage? Shifting from the individual to the group as the primary unit of analysis, why do some understandings of Islam, and some conceptions of the best way to advance it, come to prevail over others?

Finally, one might ask, what broader local, regional, and global trends will shape the evolution of Islamist movement organizations in the future?

This is just a brief review of some of the more interesting questions worth exploring in the field of Islamist movement studies; there are undoubtedly many others, which my colleagues will delineate. But while there are many important macro-level trends to investigate, and meta-level theoretical issues to consider, I would like to conclude this memo with a pitch for greater attention to the micro-level norms, institutions, practices, and

dynamics of Islamist groups, an understanding of which is arguably a prerequisite for the identification of valid causal inferences about the underpinnings of Islamist behavior. In essence, this is a call for the kind of “thick description” advocated by Clifford Geertz, and more broadly, for the application of ethnographic methods typically associated with the discipline of anthropology to the political analysis of Islamist groups, involving sustained, in-depth, close-up observation of Islamist actors and institutions in the field. To put it bluntly, whatever macro- domestic, regional and global trends merit analysis, we can’t take their full measure without a deeper understanding of the groups in question. Dare I say it, this is a pitch for the kind of inductive, open-ended research, rooted in a deep, contextual knowledge of a particular time and place, that has become increasingly marginalized and devalued by many of the leading associations, journals, grant-making institutions, and university departments in our discipline. As someone who has studied Islamist groups for over 20 years, I am convinced that any theorizing about Islamist movements is only as good as the quality of the information underlying it. Unless and until we make the close and careful description of Islamist institutions and practices a higher priority, the validity of any broad assertions about the future of political Islam will remain open to doubt.

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Progressive Problemshift or Paradigmatic Degeneration? Approaches to Islamism Since 2011

By Stacey Philbrick Yadav, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Call me conservative, but let me explain. This workshop is a welcome opportunity to rethink assumptions, research strategies, and sources of evidence that we use in making sense of the role and impact of Islamism and Islamists, but I hope we won't throw out the baby with the bath water. Changing circumstances and a broader variety of actors eager to engage directly with our scholarship should prompt a reevaluation of some of the analytic weaknesses advanced by earlier scholarship on Islamism. But a good number of the insights regarding Islamist practice developed over the decade preceding the uprisings of 2011 can and should continue to inform our collective approach. In other words, it seems like a good time to take stock, but with an eye toward progressive refinement in our theorizing more than any kind of paradigmatic rupture. I worry that if we rely too heavily on a before and after periodization in our thinking about the impact of the uprisings in the MENA region, we risk rearticulating some of the problems that led non-specialists to accuse of being "behind the curve," and may lose some of the best insights that were developed over the course of the 2000s.

To avoid this, we should first take realistic stock of the weaknesses of the social science literature on Islamism. There are two in particular that concern me as I see little sign of them abating in post-2011 scholarship. One is an overreliance on Egypt as a focal point in understanding Islamism. There is no question that Egypt matters and that what happens in Egypt sends signals that are read by Islamists and non-Islamists elsewhere. But it is also the case that the interest in Egypt is path dependent: Prior to 2011, scholars of Islamism already displayed a well-developed Egyptocentrism. This may be partially justified on the basis of the Muslim Brotherhood's origins and the intellectual impact of some Egyptian writers beyond Egypt's borders. But it also led scholars to speculate about the possible future trajectories of Islamism in other contexts on the

basis of the Brotherhood's experience, an experience that has been driven by a range of factors that are more or less generalizable outside of Egypt. Even when eyes are on Egypt, it is a mistake to treat the message as uniform or to assume that eyes are also simultaneously elsewhere. Some scholarship, including my own, has attempted to depart from an Egyptocentric approach, but even then, the experience of the Muslim Brotherhood has remained firmly anchored as a primary point of contrast or departure.

The second, related risk that we run as a scholarly community is to continue the search for a kind of covering law to in some way "explain" Islamism in causal terms. My suspicion is that this gathering may be motivated by this impulse, but that our collective contributions to it will, as careful empirical work in the 2000s did, work against a generalizable "theory of Islamism." To the extent that our scholarly comparisons are systematic — which they often are not and arguably should not entirely be — they seem to indicate that the factors that unite Islamists are few and far between, and those that do link them are more often organizational than ideological.¹ In other words, social science arguments about the impact of regime rules, responses to repression, strategies of framing, etc. have been far more helpful in understanding Islamist practice than investigations of shared ideology. These arguments themselves tend to represent "middle range" theories that serve most effectively as an interpretive toolkit for scholars making sense of diverse empirical stories than as a one-size-fits-all causal theory.

1 A new edited volume comparing the experiences of Islamist parties in the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia bears this out with great empirical clarity, evaluating twelve different hypotheses regarding Islamist practice derived from the literature of the 2000s, and finding that only two — both organizational in nature — have strong support across cases. Quinn Mecham and Julie Chernov Hwang, eds. *Islamist Parties and Political Normalization in the Muslim World*. University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming 2014.

The Arab Uprisings (to the extent that capitalization is called for or that they constitute a unified phenomenon) offer another temptation, derivative of this search for generalizable theory: the development of a typology that maps variation in Islamist practice or identifies “kinds” of Islamists. This is an improvement on the binary moderate/radical distinction — which some in our group have rightfully critiqued at length — and typological approaches can foreground the kind of institutional factors, regime rules, and other considerations that scholarship suggests matters. But at the same time, a typology almost inevitably runs the risk of making that which is fluid and relational appear more fixed than it may be.

Rather than taking the diversity of experience that we can observe since 2011 as an opportunity to categorize and sort types of Islamism so that we might better generate reliable predictions about Islamist behavior, I hope that we will leverage and expand upon what we “got right” in the 2000s and will focus instead on giving reliable, context-dependent explanations of specific Islamists in relation to state and society in specific places. In this, I hope that we resist the impulse to approach post-2011 Islamism as fundamentally different or new. Islamism — and here, I would prefer to explicitly shift to the more analytically defensible notion of Islamist practice — has undoubtedly both responded to and driven some of the changes that we have observed in the region over the past three years. But those shifts can be made intelligible through the use of familiar interpretive lenses and research questions, and need not be thought of as necessitating a radical departure. Much of this comes from social movement theory, network analysis, and discourse analysis, and suggests that we need to be simultaneously more sensitive to the particularities of local context *and* more attentive to theoretical arguments developed outside of the MENA region, many of which further undermine the idea of Islamist exceptionalism.

So here, in a nutshell, is why I don’t think much has changed for Islamists or scholars of Islamism since 2011: Islamists are still fundamentally relational actors. They form alliances, oppose and/or challenge a range

of interlocutors, engage with institutions, follow and/or subvert rules, frame arguments, etc. These are all things that Islamists did before 2011, and they are also things that *non-Islamist* actors are doing concomitantly, in relation to Islamists. I have been wary of approaching Islamists as a class of actors deserving of special conceptual consideration, as “variables” that can be isolated from the networks in which they decide, act, and argue. I see no reason to abandon such wariness now.

An approach to Islamists as actors embedded in relationships with a wide range of interlocutors and operating in the context of specific institutions, where institutions can be taken to include both formal rules and informal norms, seems a useful way to make sense of the variation and convergence that we observe in changing political contexts across the MENA region. The nature of those interlocutors and those institutions is changing, so we can expect Islamists are too. In particular, I remain quite interested in the question of alliances, and the fluctuations in opportunities for formal competition across the region make this an opportune time to analyze the drivers and limits of alliances involving Islamist and non-Islamist (or differently-Islamist) actors and organizations. It is also an exciting time for scholars, insofar as Islamists themselves seem more eager than ever to directly engage our scholarship and the flourishing of international conferences and other fora that bring together Arab activists (Islamist and non-Islamist) along with scholars and policy practitioners are enabling a set of conversations that both complicate our scholarship and promise to enrich it.

There are other changes that I suspect really do matter, as well, and I trust that others in our collective will emphasize them more than I have. I think of the impact of popular mobilization, the proliferation of regional conferences, workshops, and “trainings” for activists from across the region, the diffusion of arguments via a range of media technologies, the mimetic adaptation of these arguments to local conditions, and more. All of these seem to be fruitful points for investigating the contours of Islamist practice. My primary concern, however, is that we not

artificially isolate Islamists in our consideration of these changing factors — by asking only about *their* conferences, diffusions, adaptations — in ways that they have not been isolated in practice, but instead work always to approach Islamists as situated alongside others who help to change them and are changed by them.

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The Project on Middle East Political Science

The Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) is a collaborative network that aims to increase the impact of political scientists specializing in the study of the Middle East in the public sphere and in the academic community. POMEPS, directed by Marc Lynch, is based at the Institute for Middle East Studies at the George Washington University and is supported by the Carnegie Corporation and the Henry Luce Foundation. For more information, see <http://www.pomeps.org>.